THE

MERCHANT-MECHANIC.

A Tale of "New England Athens."

BY MARY A. HOWE.

"Worth makes the man, the want of it, the fellow;
The rest is all but leather, or prunella."

Pope.

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CHAPTER I.

THE COLLISION.

NIGHT'S sable plumage, uplifted from the face of the broad Atlantic, was giving place to the grey pinions of dawn, drooping, half hidden, in the heavy mist that enshrouded them. Through the dark settling fog a noble steamer, urged onward by its commander's insane desire to see his mighty ocean-steed outvie in speed its many compeers, makes reckless, perilous headway with its priceless freight of human souls.

Much the longer portion of the voyage from Liverpool to New York is safely over-passed, and, amongst all that sleeping crowd which throng cabin, state-room, and steerage, there is not a dream of danger.

Thrillingly falls the sudden cry, "Hard starboard," on ears lulled to slumber by "old ocean's drowsy roar;" and, in another instant, all on board are fully roused to keen and startling consciousness by a concussion so violent that the vessel reels and quivers in every timber. For a minute, the black hull and tall masts of a large ship loom up before the affrighted vision of the terrified and bewildered mariners, and, the next, is swallowed up by the all-consuming fog. Wild, tumultuous confusion reigns amongst the motley crowd which gathers about the Captain and officers, piteously imploring to be told, at once, how much they have to fear. Strong men are there with blanched cheeks and

bloodless lips ; and fragile women, heedless alike of the dish eled locks flowing over their snowy night-robes, and of t blue-veined, tender feet gleaming out upon the cold dec canvass.

In perils upon land, there is, with very few exceptions, so possible chance of escape ; but who shall paint the hopeless te ror of perils on the deep, where the only refuge held out b the remorseless sea is a watery winding-sheet—an unknow grave ?

Somewhat reassured by the Captain's expressed convictio that the vessel was not damaged beyond repair, and by observ ing that she still held steadily on her way, the majority of th passengers, some of them relieving their over-wrought feelings b gushes of bitter, passionate tears, went away for addition clothing ; while others, less sanguine by nature, remained, wit dry-eyed anguish offering their services in manning the pump or in doing whatever else might be required of them. Attempt were made, with all possible expedition, to draw a wet sa about the bows and thus reduce the leakage from the outsid while a mate, with several seamen and passengers, bearing ma tresses, etc., was ordered below to break out the freight, and, possible, reach the leak from inside. Bootless endeavor ! Th water was beforehand with them ; the hold was nearly full ; th lower fire was out, and the steamer slowly settling down in th water. It became an understood thing that the ship must b abandoned. This was the time to try men's souls. Nobly h roic some there were, who would gladly have yielded up li (never felt to be dearer than when thus menaced) to have bee assured of the ultimate safety of the loved ones so helpless clinging to them for the protection they were powerless to give and others still, who forgot honor, duty, true manhood, in th one maddening desire of escape from the threatening jaws of th all-devouring Deep.

Passengers and crew were still vigorously working at th pumps. Under the Captain's directions one of the guard boa was filled and ordered to be lowered away ; but no sooner ha she touched the water than a stream of frantic men, despite th

Captain's assurance that there was ample time for getting out the other boats, poured over the bulwarks into the one already lowered, knocking the men about to take the oars overboard or into the bottom of the boat, crushing and maiming its passengers, and finally capsizing their last ark of refuge, which went down with all on board, not one being saved to recount the sad tale of disaster.

Thanks to the strenuous exertions of the brave Captain, who stood, pistol in hand, threatening to shoot down the first man guilty of entering it without orders; the next boat was filled, mostly with passengers, and, with a bountiful supply of water and provisions, fairly started on its perilous voyage.

Deep was the mortification and wrath of the Captain, while superintending the filling of still another boat, to perceive the one which had been ordered around to assist in drawing a sail about the bows, rapidly falling astern, rowed by the officers and firemen in possession of her.

Springing aft, he fiercely shouted after them a peremptory order to "round to, and pull for the ship."

A cry of "Lay to the oars," was the only response from the boat's crew, who were perfectly aware that they were beyond the reach of their baffled commander's rage. Smothering a curse at the self-willed obstinacy which was thus depriving more than one brave heart of its last hope of escape, the Captain returned to the completion of the task interrupted by the treacherous desertion of those who should have been his stay and support in this trying hour.

His absence had been short, but sufficiently long for the remaining portion of the crew to lower the half-filled boat, and, jumping into her from the guards, (much nearer the water's edge now than before the ship had begun to settle down), to push her off from the vessel's side. After a hurried consultation with the only officer on board, the fifth and last boat, (one had been washed overboard in a gale, the second day out from Liverpool), was launched by the Captain's orders. "There is not a carpenter *left us to put together* a raft," he cried, wiping the *streaming perspiration from* his anxious brow.

"I am one; only give me your commands," said an active, slightly built, but strong and muscular young man, seizing an axe and looking as if ready to work with a will, in whatever way his services were required. He was one of the steerage passengers, Leroy by name, and was plainly clad in a strong and not over-fine suit of black. In appearance he was in no way remarkable, unless it might have been for a simple, unassuming dignity of demeanor, and an intelligence and refinement of expression, but too rarely seen in connection with toil-hardened hands, bronzed complexion, and coarse attire. But this is no time to pause for calm personal description. Spars, yards, water casks and other needful articles were speedily thrown overboard, and busy hands, with desperate energy, were soon lashing them into the required form.

The raft was still incomplete when Mr. Leroy returned to the deck, and it was through his assistance that more than one woman and child found their way down the vessel's side, to a place, at least, of temporary safety.

Sharply the cry of "Ship sinking," rang over the water, and in a sudden panic the boat was pushed off and rowed away, carrying the raft in tow. Mr. Leroy was left upon the wreck. Several of his wretched companions plunged into the sea to swim after the receding boat; he prepared to follow their example. Some one grasped him by the arm; he looked quickly around; it was the ship's steward. "'Twas a false alarm," he said, in the low, compressed tone of extreme excitement; "you'll never hold out to reach the raft; there are several minutes to work in yet. Help me to roll these casks together; there, that will do, there is a little water in them; it will answer, perhaps, for ballast. Help me to lash them together; we couldn't have a better hull for our craft—this hatch for the deck. We must hurry—quick!—a nail here and another there, and we shall be able to keep above water till the boat comes back for us. She's going—save yourself!"

He threw himself, face downwards, upon the diminutive raft, Mr. Leroy instantly following his example. As the bulwarks disappeared beneath the water, a heart-rending wail, piercing to the

very heavens, went up from that doomed crowd to be buried alive by the angry billows. On the instant, Mr. Leroy found himself torn resistlessly from the frail support beneath him, and catching with wild eagerness at something to cling to, he clutched only the treacherous waves, which closed over him with the sound of a mighty roaring cataract, as he plunged down the mad abyss. How moments were lengthened to seeming hours, as down and down he rushed with a velocity that made his brain reel, as much from the fierce downward plunge as with the stunning surge that boomed on his ears. Thought, instead of being deadened thereby, seemed quickened to supernatural energy, and flew back, in a minute's space, over all the past years of his life. Like a lightning flash, darted across his memory the recollection of a fearful account he had read, long years ago, of the dangerous vortex caused by a sinking ship. His shoulder was grazed by a board which seemed to shoot upward past him. Was it a portion of the vessel's side, or a loose plank from her deck? Heaven forbid that he should be crushed beneath her breaking timbers in depths how far below! drowning were better far. Banish thy fear, poor fluttering spirit! ere the five miles plunge to ocean depths are over will not thy wings be folded forever? Chill consolation gave this vague and shadowy thought to his fainting heart. Another minute, and fear was banished by present suffering. The very blood in his veins seemed responding to the waters without, in fierce rushing onflows of agony, intenser at every heart-beat. Salt tears, wrung forth by extreme of bodily anguish, mingled with the salter brine. Oh, the horrors of prolonged suffocation! Oh, for a single long-drawn breath—a moment's relief from the deadly weight of water so slowly crushing out the life of its tortured victim!

Still, memory lived on. When a boy he had dreamed of crawling into a small hole to escape some threatened danger, and of getting so firmly wedged therein that it was impossible to retreat, and the whole weight of the edifice had seemed resting on his breath; the same unendurably oppressive sensation he felt *then*, he was now experiencing.

"Oh God, for a speedy death!"—that last sad cry of despairing humanity—was the voiceless prayer of his heart.

His senses had so nearly forsaken him that he failed to perceive that he was stationary at last. Slowly he began to ascend, then more and more rapidly, until he sprang, head and shoulders, above the surface of the water. Unconsciously he drew in his breath with a lengthened sob, and exhaled it in a sound between a shriek and a groan, thus giving vent to the pent-up misery within him.

A portion of a paddle-box came crashing up near him, rousing to new life the instinct of self-preservation in his breast. He struck out, with what strength he had, to gain a safer distance from the dangerous vicinity. With his exhausted strength and overstrained powers of endurance, he was making way but slowly, when a hideous human head, with gory locks and ghastly upturned face, rose up before him. A sickening, nameless dread made his flesh creep as he recognized the poor steward, and saw him, with a last gasp, sink to rise no more. Turning his head away from the spot, he hailed as a bright omen for the future (superstition dies only with life) the sight of the little raft, the result of their joint handiwork, by a miracle of good luck, right side up and not far distant. Reaching it, he clung to its side until gaining sufficient strength to drag himself upon it. Chilled, dripping-wet, quivering in every nerve, he threw himself face downward upon its strong planks, no longer striving against the numbing lethargy which crept over him.

He did violence to every impulse of mind and body when he forcibly roused himself, at sound of a piercing childish cry, "O mamma, mamma!" and saw, not many feet distant, floating in the water, a little girl whom he had often remarked on the steamer, for the more than filial tenderness she had bestowed on a pale, sad-eyed woman he had conjectured to be her mother.

Crawling to the edge of the hatch nearest to her, he attempted to possess himself of a long, narrow bit of plank floating near, hoping therewith to be able to scull his frail skiff within reach of the child, and pull her upon it. But, although he stretched himself out over the water, the strip of plank eluded his grasp,

and warned by his failing strength not to trust himself to the waves, he called out, "Don't fear, little one; your life-preserver will keep you safe till I can reach you." A moment later he added, "Put your hands before you, so, then throw them out in this way, 'twill send the water behind you and drift you towards me." She obeyed with so much success, that, by the time he had been able to seize the desired substitute for an oar, she was near enough to grasp it firmly with both hands, and was thus drawn on board.

"Oh, sir, do you think mamma is drowned, and that I never shall see her again?" was her first eager, half-despairing question as soon as she felt herself safe for the time.

Mr. Leroy looked on their narrow circle of vision, bounded in by the fog, and as he saw a number of half-drowned wretches, convulsively clinging to broken bits of the wreck, but no signs of the boat for whose return they prayed, he could not find it in his heart to give a direct answer to her question; but replied by asking another: "When did you see her last?"

"I had hold of her hand when they called out that the ship was going down; we jumped into the water together, but I went under, a long way, I think; 'twas then I lost her. You don't think I shall never see her again?"

She waited in vain for a reply to this trembling assertion, which had taken a questioning form. His head had fallen back on the hard plank, his arms hung helpless by his side, and his half-open eyes were fixed and immovable. Was he dying; and she to be left alone again on the wide, wide ocean?

The new anxiety, for the moment, drowned all others. She succeeded in drawing his head partly upon her lap, and drawing from her bosom a handkerchief, (the sight of it had nearly upset her new-born fortitude, as it had been placed there through a mother's tender watchfulness,) she wiped the slow-gathering foam from his livid lips, while her tears rained over his face; and a child's untold fear of death—death for him, perhaps a more lingering one for herself—made her heart throb with an indefinable, shrinking terror few are called upon to undergo. What a relief! when, after what had seemed an age of feverish, almost

breathless, suspense, the eyes she had feared were never more to open slowly unclosed.

"O sir, I hope you are better."

His cold hand pressed the small fingers that were chafing it, assuringly.

He was soon able to raise himself upon an elbow and look about him. Nothing in sight but the cold, dark waves and the unfriendly mist that closed about them.

She kept tight hold of his arm as if thankful once more to have something to cling to. Noticing this, he put his arm about her to give the protection for which the wan face and large appealing eyes so eloquently pleaded.

"What is your name?"

"Ellen Verne; what is yours, sir?"

"Lawrence Leroy. I am afraid, Ellen, that this thick fog will prevent our seeing the boat if it comes back to pick up those who keep themselves above water by clinging to pieces of the wreck."

"O Mr. Leroy, my mamma might be amongst them, mightn't she?"

"Very possibly she might."

Her face lighted up with a hope he scarcely shared. His heart was heavy with oppressive forebodings. He was asking himself if there was one chance in a thousand of their being rescued from their perilous position. Without food or water, how long was it possible for them to hold out as they were? to leave out of the account those gales, so frequently occurring at this season of the year, (mid-Autumn), one of which would prove their speedy destruction.

Slowly the long hours wore away, and once more night brooded over the face of the Deep. Ellen made no complaint; but when Mr. Leroy felt her slight frame shivering with the cold, he took the weary child in his arms, and pillowing her head on his shoulder, shielded her as much as possible from the chill night-breeze: she slept. Through all the dreary night Mr. Leroy did not close his eyes in slumber.

Morning brought with it a drizzling rain, unaccompanied by

wind: perhaps this prevented their suffering the pangs of thirst as they might otherwise have done.

A second time the shades of evening closed about them, and neither had acknowledged to the other the craving for food which tormented them. Gradually the atmosphere cleared, and, one by one, the stars came out, shedding a holy calm over the waters. Once more, guarded by the friendly arms of the stranger, Ellen slept fitfully and by starts. He kept lonely but faithful vigil over her. It was near midnight when she was suddenly awakened by his loud shout of "Ship ahoy!" and saw, at no great distance from them, the tall masts of a stately vessel as she slowly pursued her course. But, although Mr. Leroy shouted himself hoarse, without pause the ship bore on her way. Being to leeward of her, the wind (what slight breeze there was) carried his voice in the wrong direction, and, although within hailing distance, he failed of making himself heard. More despairing than ever, he strove to resign himself to his fate: it was very hard when succor had been so near.

"What is the matter? are you crying, child?"

"I want some water and a piece of bread. I dreamed of being at home, with a whole loaf of seed-cake on my plate; it was so delicious!" And she moved her tongue as if the taste was still in her mouth.

This was a theme on which he cared not to dwell. He, too, had had his intense longing for a cup of cold water; but while she had slept he had been indulging in a series of waking visions, in which imagination had tantalized him with a long train of counterfeit presentments. He remembered, with eager desire, the fragrant bowl of punch, around which the family had been wont to gather, in days of yore, at merry Christmas-time—the foaming glass of ale, over which he would now have smacked his lips with a gusto never known before—the delft mug of root-beer from the little keg so oft replenished in the long summer days. Oh for a draught of that home-brewed beer! how soothingly, how refreshingly, would it glide over his parched and smarting palate. It seemed to him that if he ever reached land again

—how achingly he strained his eyes over the starlit waste of waters!—he should spend a great portion of his future life in the preparation of those delicious beverages he had hitherto so thanklessly, so unaccountably, failed to appreciate.

This was the train of thought which had been interrupted by the welcome appearance of a sail; the result we know.

"Are you cold, Ellen, that you shiver so?"

"Yes, very," she said through her sobs.

He chafed her cold feet until the impeded circulation was in a measure restored, then clasped her chilled form more closely in his arms.

"Thank you; you are very kind," she said, checking her tears, that they might not add to his affliction.

"Talk to me, Ellen, for I am drowsy, and I must not go to sleep: I might roll from the raft with you."

"You don't suppose, Mr. Leroy, that those frightful sharks, who can swallow a man at two mouthfuls, live in this part of the sea, do you?"

"Mercy, child, don't talk about such *horrible* things; this is no place for it. I hope we shall fall in with another ship when daylight comes—if one would only pass *then* as near as the other did!"

They were silent for a long time.

"When will it be morning?" asked Ellen, wearily.

"Very soon. That is the East; don't you see that it is already streaked with light?"

The sun rose bright and cloudless, darting down fierce, scalding rays upon their unprotected heads.

"Mr. Leroy, isn't there water in these casks under us?"

"Yes, poor child, if one could but get at it."

"Couldn't you break in one of the heads with this strip of board?"

He shook his head hopelessly, and both relapsed into silence again, straining their eyes over the boundless waste for the sail that came not.

The sun's rays were pouring down vertically upon them, when

she cried out, "O Mr. Leroy, this terrible gnawing at my stomach! I cannot bear it much longer. And this burning, *burning* thirst!"

He answered her not. What need? could words supply the place of meat and drink? Were not his own sufferings taxing his powers of endurance to the uttermost?

She writhed convulsively in his arms, and her long, matted curls fell, now over his shoulder, and now flowed over the planks at his feet. Her wild, blood-shotten eyes, which flashed open with spasmodic, muscular action, had lost all softness of expression. Carefully moving to the foot of the plank, he bathed her wrists and face in the cool sea-water. With a sudden spring she had nearly escaped from his hold: he caught her back.

"Be careful, Ellen, or you will be overboard."

"It wouldn't matter much; I'm not afraid of the water *now*."

After this she lay on his arm, calm, exhausted, almost senseless, and Mr. Leroy was virtually alone. He felt strangely reckless and excited, himself. Bending over the edge of the raft he scooped up some water with his disengaged hand, and devoured it with eyes full of a fierce, animal longing, then rubbed it over his blistered face. Tasting the salt on his lips, he shook with an emotion indescribable and full of bitterness. To die, bravely struggling for life, is less horrible, by half, to the man of high and noble impulses, than being condemned to supine inaction, while the dark angel destroys by slow and lingering tortures, from which there is no escape.

Over the edge of the raft Mr. Leroy bent once more, glaring into the depths below, while a cold, leaden horror weighed down the very sources of life. By some electric chain of association, memory recalled the story of a wretched criminal, condemned by a barbarous mandate to sit for twelve mortal hours on the verge of the open grave, in which, at sundown, he was to be buried alive,—shut out forever, in the prime of life, in the fullness of his strength, from the pleasant light of the sun, the smiling fields, and the faces of his kind.

"Oh God! who art everywhere, forsake us not! Help or we perish!"

Is that speck on the distant horizon a sail? A few moments of suspense, and he is assured of the fact. Is his prayer to be so soon answered?

"Ellen, *Ellen!*" (he is obliged to repeat the name ere she gives token of hearing him,) "courage for a little longer! there is a vessel coming nearer to us every minute."

She endeavored to smile her gladness, but the relaxed muscles refused obedience to her will; and her effort resulted in a contortion of feature, most pitiable to behold, from the utter helplessness it betrayed. Once more he chafed her numbed feet into warmth, and bathed again her flaccid arms.

Slowly the vessel neared them until nearly abreast of their little raft, and about a mile distant. Laying the almost unconscious child down on the planks, and standing with one foot on either side of her, Mr. Leroy drew his shirt over his head, and, tying it by both sleeves to the strip of board he had retained, he waved it about his head, hoping it might catch the eye of some one on board.

A second time to be almost within reach of succor, and yet to fail of obtaining it! his signal is unregarded. Steadily the ship stands on her way. The last ray of hope fades from his breast. He feels that his doom is sealed, and, so far as the pangs of hunger and thirst will permit, strives to plume his spirit's pinions for Heaven. His past life passes in rapid review before him; its weaknesses, its sins stand all confessed; in broken ejaculations he implores pardon—mercy, and lays himself down to die.

CHAPTER II.

THE "ALARIC."—"THE HOME."

DEATH comes not at the bidding of mortal. The love of life dies but with life itself. Although courting death, Mr. Leroy raises himself for one last look at the receding ship. His pulses bound in his veins : she has *hove to*, and is lowering a boat. The men in it, after rowing a short distance, draw something from the water, and afterwards take a wide sweep around the vessel. Mr. Leroy, nerved afresh, seizes the favorable moment to swing the signal about his head, and is answered by a loud "huzza" from the boat's crew. Hot tears are on his cheek as the dead hope springs to life in his breast. We weep in sorrow, and often times in joy.

The brawny arms of the rowers soon brought them alongside. Mr. Leroy's small remnant of strength deserted him, as, with his senseless charge, he was drawn over the gunnel. Two sailors held up his trembling form, while one of them held to his lips an uncorked bottle of restorative cordial.

"She needs it the most," he said, looking at the apparently lifeless form of Ellen, as she lay across the lap of an officer, whose hand was pressed to her heart ; and sinking upon his knees, he forced apart her jaws and poured some of the cordial into her mouth.

"Take a swig at it yourself," cried an honest old tar ; "and bless your stars we were sent out to pick a man off a piece of a paddle-box : he was dead, but if it hadn't ha' been for him you'd ha' had a short cruise to Davy's locker."

Ellen's eyes opened mechanically with a vacant, expressionless stare. "She will do well enough, only give her time," said the officer.

"Take a pull at the bottle, my hearty, for you are as white about the *gills as a land-lubber in* his first sea-gale," persisted the *kind-hearted sailor.*

Mr. Leroy replied by imbibing a long draught of the reviving liquid, which he swallowed with difficulty, as his throat was considerably swollen from the effects of abstinence and exposure.

Faint with excess of thankfulness, he found himself on the deck of an English ship bound out for Portsmouth. Strangely enough she was named the "Rescue."

The stewardess brought him a bowl of broth as he lay on a settee, of which he partook with infinite relish, despite the irritation of his inflamed palate. The Captain asked him a few questions as to the cause of the deplorable condition to which he had been reduced, and the length of time he had been floating on the sea, to which Mr. Leroy replied, like one but half awake.

"It will be time enough to learn particulars when he has slept," said the ship's commander, and ordered him to be carried below and placed in a hammock, where, after begging for drink, with which he was plenteously supplied, and learning that Ellen was comfortably provided for, he fell into a heavy, dreamless slumber which lasted till next morning. Hearty congratulations and kind enquiries greeted him on every side, as, after fortifying the inner man with an abundance of creature comforts, he ascended to the deck. There were some wet-eyed listeners as he gave a detailed account of the awful circumstances already described as attending the steamer's wreck. Officers and crew united in deeds of kindness to the guests so opportunely brought amongst them. After satisfying the curiosity of all, by replying at length to their numerous questions, he enquired after the welfare of the child whose life he had, under Providence, been the means of rescuing.

"The little girl is in my cabin," said the Captain, "you can see her, come." He led the way to the door of the cabin, where he was met by his wife, to whom he presented Mr. Leroy, and withdrew.

"How is she?" he asked, still standing on the threshold.

"Come in, sir, and see for yourself," said the lady, pointing to a sofa on which Ellen lay, wrapped in blankets.

Her dim eyes, surrounded by a circle of livid purple, brightened at his approach, and she laid her hand in his without speaking.

"How are you this morning, my poor girl?"

"Better."

The word was hardly articulated, but he understood it, and looked as if he expected her to go on and tell him more about herself.

"Can't talk." And she laid her finger on her stiff and discolored lips, to intimate that it was only with much pain she moved them at all. Then, as if fearful that he might deem her ungrateful, she took his hand between both her own, and laid it beneath her head, and rested her cheek upon it, with a look of perfect trust and confidence. He gazed down upon her with great kindliness; for he had been deeply touched by the entire dependence on himself which her action had seemed to imply. Promising to look in upon her often,—a promise he amply redeemed,—he left the cabin.

The second day after their rescue, they were so fortunate as to fall in with a steamer, which proved to be the "Alaric," inward bound for Boston, the very place of Mr. Leroy's original destination, as, on reaching New York, he had intended immediately to start by rail for the former city.

After a short parley, by the aid of speaking trumpets, between the Captains of the two vessels, the "Rescue" *hove to*, and, with many expressions of heart-felt gratitude to their preservers, our two voyagers were transferred from the ship's deck to that of the steamer. Here, too, the story of their wreck and subsequent sufferings created a strong interest in their behalf, strengthened, perhaps, by the extreme fragility of Ellen's appearance as she tottered about the deck, weighed down by an oppressive sense of weary lassitude. Her face, remarkable for sweetness and purity of expression, saddened as it was by a look of grief unnaturally deep for one of her childish years, kindled a sympathy amongst the lady passengers, which did not evaporate in mere sentiment. They not only made up a purse for the supply of her more immediate necessities, but put their children's wardrobes under contribution, until there seemed no likelihood of her wanting for clothing for a year to come.

Although grateful, even to tears, for all the tokens of kind-

ness bestowed by her new friends, to none of them did she seem to dream of attaching herself in the same way as to Mr. Leroy. To his care she committed her money and whatever else came into her possession, not venturing upon any movement, however trifling, which was advised by others, without first seeking his counsel and approval.

As they neared their port of destination, he thought, more seriously than ever before, of the most advisable method to be adopted under his self-assumed responsibility; and finally went in search of Ellen to aid him in fixing upon some definite plan for the future. He found her at last, far aft, and snugly stowed away in a corner between the outer walls of the saloon or "house" and the bulwarks, secure from observation, and softly crying to herself.

"I wish to talk with you, Ellen. Is any thing the matter?" he asked, sitting down beside her, and thus possessing himself of a larger portion of her hiding-place.

"I was thinking of my mamma; won't it be terrible if I am never, *never* to see her again?"

"Don't grieve so; it makes me feel badly to see you," he said simply, as he drew one hand away from her eyes.

This was the strongest motive that could have been addressed to her; she hastened to dry her eyes, assuming an attitude of listening attention.

"You were on your way to New York; have you any friends there?"

"No, sir, not a single one. I was just thinking of it: what will become of me when I get there?"

"You needn't worry about that; I will take care of you, and provide a home for you if there is no one else to do it."

"How good you are; but there is no use in thanking you; I should do that for a small kindness, now it isn't enough."

"Have you no relations in the world? Tell me all about yourself, that I may know if there is any one likely to claim you."

"I believe I have some distant relations in Scotland, but they are very poor, and I never saw them. My grandfather, two

uncles, and my little sister died of cholera, this last summer, in Manchester, England, where we always lived. Papa said home wasn't pleasant after that, and he was always talking about a man of the same age as he was, who went to the United States when a boy, and got employment as runner in a bank, and finally got to be cashier, and had four times the salary that papa earn't as superintendent of a cotton factory.

"Mamma was never willing to go to the States until after sister Bessie died. She was a great deal stronger and livelier than I am, for she was always perfectly well, but it gave me the back-ache, ever since I can remember, to take a long walk, or jump and skip as she used to, because I never got over a bad fall I had when I was very little; it was *that* that made my spine crooked, and one shoulder higher than the other."

"Was it pleasant where you lived at Manchester?"

"Papa thought it wasn't healthy, but I liked it, it was *so nice* to look out into the church-yard, which was in plain sight, and see the beautiful, soft moonlight shining over the grave-stones, and the ivy that wound about the church-tower which had the sweetest chime of bells. Mamma—poor, darling mamma, wrote some verses about them, which everybody admired:" And her eyes brimmed over at the reflection.

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen, come Christmas."

"Was your father on board the steamer too?"

"Yes, it was he who tied on my life-preserver," she replied, gulping down a rising sob that strove to escape. "He sold every thing we had, and mamma stitched the money he got for it into his vest. He said we could live on that till he found something to do in New York."

She interrupted the long silence that succeeded this communication by saying—

"Can I ask you a question, Mr. Leroy?"

"Certainly, as many as you like."

"Aren't you an Englishman?"

He nodded assentingly.

"What were you going to America for?"

"Boston has been my home for a number of years: I only went to Liverpool to collect a small fortune of a couple of hundred pounds, left me by an elder brother."

"I noticed the crape on your hat; was it for him?"

He nodded again, this time with a look of sorrow that she was sorry to have caused. She was silent a little while, then asked—

"Did you collect the fortune you went out for?"

"Yes, all in gold, so I am none the better off for it now."

When she had thought over this reply until she understood it, she asked—

"Why did you go out to the States in the first place?"

"I thought I should be able to get more steady employment, at better wages."

"Do you have to work for a living, then?"

"Work for a living? yes, indeed: why not? How did you suppose I got a living if I didn't work for it?"

"Why, I thought you were a gentleman," she replied, in confusion.

"Well, have you changed your opinion? Have you found any one on board who has been more *gentle* to you than I have?"

"Oh, you have been very, *very* kind; I didn't mean *that*, because I don't see that it has any thing to do with being a gentleman."

His face assumed a look of amused curiosity as he said:

"Let us have your idea of what a gentleman really is, Ellen."

She hesitated, then replied in a quick, embarrassed way—

"Why, it is one who has a fortune left to him, instead of having to earn one; who has every thing he wants, and more too, without having to work for it; who has servants to wait upon him, and doesn't do any thing for himself or any body else."

"Ah! doesn't do any thing for anybody! I plainly see I *can not* be included in *your* list of gentlemen, as I have done considerable for somebody not far off, in the way of saving her life."

At this assertion, she looked so much puzzled and distressed that he could not forbear a smile, as he proposed leaving their hiding place; and pointing out to her the objects of interest as they steamed up the harbor; past the sandy beach of Cape Cod, inside the light-house, by the rocky shores of Cohasset, at last they have reached the wharf.

Many persons crowd on board to welcome relatives and friends, but no one comes to claim relationship with Mr. Leroy and the pale, little girl who clings to him, as though, in losing him, her sole earthly stay would be gone, as so, indeed, it would. On learning that Mr. Leroy had been on board the last steamer, the new-comers gather about him and anxiously inquire into particulars of the wreck, if, haply, they may still indulge the hope of some loved one's ultimate escape. He, in turn, eagerly questions them, in regard to any survivors who may have been rescued from the ill-fated vessel, and learns that two boats have been fallen in with, and their passengers brought to New York; no one else has been heard from. He understands the convulsive clasp with which Ellen's fingers close over his own.

After rendering grateful acknowledgments to all on board, he has nothing to do but take Ellen's bundle of clothing in his disengaged hand, and, passing through the open gangway, to pick their way among the drays, trucks, carriages and people which throng the wharf. On they go, he walking so rapidly that she has almost to run to keep pace with his hasty strides; now through a narrow alley, where chubby-faced children, with bare feet and scant draperies, sit on the ground engaged in that primitive species of cookery vulgarly known as "dirt pies;" and rough-haired, blear-eyed dogs poke their hungry noses into the old fashioned paste; then into a cleanlier court, its five-storied dwellings looking like so many lofty brick boxes, with glazed slits at regular intervals, surrounded by casings having about equal claims to artistic elegance of design with the pierced loop-holes of a fort.

Turning a corner, they enter a broad, noisy thoroughfare, where their eyes are one moment dazzled by the brilliant display

of some jeweller's window, and the next soothed by the softer sheen of silks and velvets.

They ascend a flight of steps and stand in a broad, uncarpeted hall, with painted numbers on the doors ranged about it. A porter points them through it, after a few words from Mr. Leroy. They are shown up several flights of stairs, into a small attic.

"Will you be afraid, Ellen, to be left here alone for an hour? I will be back in that time."

Scarcely waiting for an answer, he bids her make herself comfortable, and hurries away. Almost unconsciously she looked about the room, taking a mental inventory of every article it contained, from the rickety chair, and yellow bowl and pitcher, to the sky-light with its curtain of cobwebs, and the faded patch counterpane on the narrow bed.

What a dismal place Boston would be, to be sure, if kind Mr. Leroy had not promised to take care of her; this was the one star of brightness in her night of sorrow and bereavement. The time of his absence seemed very long: he had surely been gone more than an hour.

The sound of his quick footsteps on the landing, and of his cheerful tones as he threw open the door, dissipated the whole cloud of fears and anxieties that had began to gather about her, like a sudden gush of sunshine. A cab was waiting for them at the door.

"Where are we going to drive to?" she asked, as he sat down beside her in the vehicle.

"To a very pleasant place; a large, airy house, with fine old trees about it, where I hope you will be contented, and enjoy yourself very much."

"Oh, it is where we are going to live, is it?" she asked with the utmost simplicity.

"It is a building which has been fitted up, and is superintended by, some very kind ladies, entirely for orphans, who have no relatives to claim them," he replied, somewhat uneasily. "The matron of the establishment has consented to receive you, and I have no doubt, will be very good to you."

"And you will go away and leave me there, without a single person I ever saw in my life before! Oh, Mr. Leroy! after you promised to take care of me!"

"And isn't it taking care of you to find you a comfortable home, where I am satisfied you will be well treated?"

"But why can not I live where you do?"

"Because I haven't any home, worthy of the name, myself, since my mother died; only a couple of rooms where I get along a'most any way—no place for a young girl like you."

Silenced if not convinced, she leaned back, wiping the tears from her eyes, and trying to reconcile herself to what seemed inevitable.

When they stopped at "The Home," an old man, who answered their summons at the gate, readily took Ellen and her bundle in charge.

"Oh, Mr. Leroy," she said, with trembling eagerness, "sha'n't I ever see you any more?"

"Yes indeed, I shall come to see how you get on, in two or three days." He stood, with her piercing tones of childish earnestness still ringing in his ears, until the aged porter had closed the gate, and led her up the paved walk to the large square house, painted a yellowish white, with dingy green blinds, which was thenceforth to be her home.

For the few succeeding days Mr. Leroy was so busy in examining into old affairs, and searching for fresh employment, that more than a week elapsed before he found time to visit "The Home."

On entering the gate, the infirm old porter, who sat dozing in great coat and mittens, on a block of wood, in answer to his inquiry for Ellen, pointed him to a group of merry girls, in a corner of the yard, engaged in a noisy, romping game, of whose aggregate number she was supposed to form a single item. In vain Mr. Leroy's eye ran over the youthful assemblage: the object of his search was not there. The hem of a dress peeping from beneath a high-backed wooden bench, at another part of the yard, guided him to her retreat. He found her sitting upon

the ground, her head bowed forward upon her arms which rested against the bench.

She looked up as he pronounced her name; the dark circles about her *heavy* eyes showing traces of recent tears.

"Why are you not playing with the rest of the girls, Ellen?"

"I do not care to play, ever: besides, one of the girls called me a good-for-nothing little hunchback because I fell down and spoilt their game."

"She was a mean, ill-natured creature, and I will tell her so: which one of them said it?" he asked, angrily indignant at the unfeeling taunt to one so gentle and inoffensive as the child beside him.

"Oh, I would rather not tell you; it wasn't of any consequence, only it made me feel bad to think she didn't like me; and if you should speak to her about it, it would only make her like me so much the less. Has there been any news from the lost steamer?"

"Another of the boats has been found, and all its passengers taken off by an English barque, and several persons were picked up, more dead than alive, on pieces of the wreck."

She turned pale as death, and her gaze became so strained and eager that he hastened to add:

"There was no one that *we* knew amongst those saved."

Then the straw of hope, she had unconsciously clung to, drifted from her grasp; her parents slept in the deep, and she should know their love nevermore. Oh, the bitterness of this word, *nevermore*, as applied to those who floated beside us in seeming security adown the stream of life, and, without a note of warning—a moment's space for a farewell word, a lingering look of love—sink among death's quicksands and are seen in this life *nevermore*.

As I write, how vividly I recall the memory of a gentle hand I can never take in my own again—of eyes so lately beaming with kindly interest for my welfare, but which, being closed forever, the whole future of my life will be darker for the withdrawal of their tender light. Enough! 'tis not of myself I should

write: my hand grows tremulous, and my eyes are fast blinding with tears.

To return to Ellen. The full anguish of bereavement swept over a soul rapidly maturing under the influence of early suffering. She repressed all outward expression of emotion, until, trembling in every fibre, she sobbed forth, "I have no friends or relations in the world, to go to, now."

"I will be a brother to you, so help me Heaven!" said Mr. Leroy, with moistened eyes. He remembered the lonely sorrow with which he had brooded over his own desolate lot for the few days succeeding the death of his mother, and his heart was melted within him.

Ellen's attempted reply to his offer of fraternal regard was cut short by a violent fit of coughing.

He was startled.

"You ought not to sit on the ground," he said, rising; "it isn't safe in this country. Where are your bonnet and hood? You ought never to come out without them."

"I have only one shawl which a lady on board the "Alaric" gave me: it is too nice to wear every day."

"Then let us go into the house."

She led the way under the old maples, whose foliage was already brilliant with the hectic bloom betokening autumnal decay. Pausing in the hall, she asked him if he would like to go to the recitation-room, where the matron and teachers were sitting. Not if there was any other room they could go to, he said. She suggested the large apartment where they took their meals, and he accordingly followed her to a long room, with bare pine tables, flanked by rows of wooden benches, running down its centre. Several young girls were putting clean dishes into a closet, at its opposite end, while one was on her hands and knees scrubbing the floor.

"It was my turn to do chamber-work to-day; I shall not have to touch anything down stairs till the latter part of the week," said Ellen, explanatively.

She concluded the sentence by a second fit of coughing, pressing her hand to her side, as she said—

"Sometimes it cuts like a knife, here, when I breathe."

The words troubled him. Had he shielded her from the cold all through that miserable night on the raft, only to have her fall a victim to consumption, our climate's scourge, at last!

Her next remark was not calculated to set his mind at rest on the subject:

"I wonder why everybody here is so much warmer than I am! We never have a fire, and none of them seem to feel the want of one, though I am chilly all day long, out in the sunshine as well as in the house."

"You must have a woollen dress; I will speak to the matron about it."

"Thank you very much. And now, please, will you tell me all about how you live? Who takes care of the two rooms you told me of?"

"The woman who does my washing gives them, what she calls, a regular tidying-up—that is, she puts every thing she can lay hands on in some such out-of-the-way place that it generally takes me till midnight to hunt them up again—once a week, when she comes for the clothes. As for the rest of the time, it's precious little care they get from anybody."

"Do you have to make your own bed?"

"Yes, after a fashion."

"You don't do your own cooking, too?"

"Only now and then: I commonly get my meals at some cellar or restaurant."

"How I wish I could see the place where you live!"

"You can easily do that, if you think the long walk wouldn't be too much for you."

"I shouldn't think of being tired if I was going to *your* home," she asserted, with a brightening expression.

"I would let you come and stay all day," he said, "if I wasn't afraid of your getting lonesome and crying your eyes out, while I was away at my work."

"Try me, brother Laurence: may I call you so?"

He nodded approvingly.

"You do not know how I do wish I could be alone here,

sometimes; but I can't, even while I am saying my prayers, for there are half a dozen beds (no curtains to them, either), in the room where I sleep, and I can never go up stairs without finding some of the girls there. How soon, brother, may I come and stay all day at your rooms?"

"As soon as you like."

"By the first of the week?"

"To-morrow, if you wish it."

"Yes, indeed; but how am I to find the way?"

"I will call for you, before I go to my work, if you will take care of yourself, and not get any more cold before I come. I am going to speak to the matron, now, and I shall not see you again, to-day." He held out his hand, and, rising with the polite courtesy of mature womanhood, she placed her own in his extended palm, with a cheerful "Good-bye."

Early next morning, when the white-headed porter opened the gate for him, Mr. Leroy caught a glimpse of a small, pale face, shaded by a close straw bonnet; the next instant, Ellen was walking down the gravel path to meet him.

"How is the cold, this morning?" he asked.

"Better: a teacher made some hot mustard tea for me to drink when I was going to bed, and I didn't cough once all night; though I got up to look out of the window ever so many times, I was so afraid it might rain to-day."

His face, as he looked down upon her with a wondering look, seemed to say, that he thought her a strangely curious child to be so desirous of spending a day alone, in a house she had never seen. Perhaps she had not rightly understood that he was not to be with her through the day, so he said:

"You know I shall be obliged to leave you at the door, and you will not have a person to speak to until one o'clock, when I will have our dinner sent in from an eating-house."

"Yes, I know—but why not buy a steak and let me cook it? I have brought my everyday calico dress on purpose not to spoil my best one in tidying-up your room."

To this proposition he made no objections, thinking it might amuse her to have something to occupy her time in his absence;

stepping into a provision-store on their way, the needful pur chases were made, and they paused not again in their walk, un til, taking a latch-key from his pocket, Mr. Leroy threw open the outer door of a two-storied wooden dwelling, and they stepped into a low-ceiled hall, its floor carpeted with a painted canvas, somewhat worse for the wear; and its walls covered with a dingy paper, which showed but faint traces of its former delicate tinting.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST ESSAY AT HOUSEKEEPING.

Up the narrow stairs, covered with a striped woolen carpet, kept in its place by shining brass rods, Mr. Leroy led his keenly observant guest. From the upper entry a second key admitted them to a decent-sized room, of which a bed occupied one corner.

A pair of thick boots and an odd slipper stood beside the grate, half filled with "kindlings," which, he said, he had intended to light, but had not found time. On one chair hung several stringless collars, and on a second an untrimmed lamp, a pair of oily shears, a case-knife badly notched in the blade, a broken bellows, and a number of those nondescript articles of wearing-apparel which are sure to collect (how, deponent sayeth not), in a lone bachelor's lodgings.

"This is my kitchen," he said, showing her into a large room, back of the one just entered, and looking out upon a limited prospect of brick walls, copper gutters, and sheds for drying clothes. The smouldering embers on the hearth he coaxed into a flame, while Ellen noticed the convenient arrangement of the small sink, with the faucet above it, for the easy admission of rain-water from a cistern in the roof.

"This is my store-room, where you will find every thing you may want to use in getting dinner."

She looked into the roughly boarded apartment, to which he directed her attention, and saw some wood neatly piled against a small coal bin : a carpenter's bench and chest of tools occupied the back-ground, while a bucket of flour and a variety of household necessaries filled the intermediate space. Attacking a pile of pots, kettles, tins and toasting-irons, he finally succeeded in drawing forth a rusty gridiron, which he handed to Ellen, with a small sum of money in change, telling her to step round the corner to the grocer's, if she found herself in need of any thing he had forgotten to purchase, and then hurried away, with the fear of being late to his work.

The moment he opened the kitchen door, on his return at the appointed hour, his olfactories were saluted by a pungent odor of burnt meat, and there was Ellen, with flushed cheeks, kneeling on the hearth and blowing vehemently at a slice of beef-steak which she held suspended on a fork.

"O, Mr. Leroy, I never saw a steak act so before, *never ;* it is determined to burn up, though I have done nothing but blow it out for the last ten minutes."

He good-naturedly came to her assistance, cutting the rim of fat off the steak, and suggesting that the glowing coals were better for broiling it than the burning brands she had forced into service. Thanks to his aid, dinner was soon in readiness, and they drew their chairs up to the table, she all the while apologizing for having taken the liberty of substituting the cotton window-curtain for the table-cloth ! which, with all her search, had not been forthcoming, and pledging her word that the former should be tied up again, exactly as she had found it.

"This isn't so bad," she went on, complacently glancing her eye over the frugal board ; "let me see, lobster for the first course, broiled steak for the second, and apple-pie for dessert."

"What good fairy sent us the dessert !" he asked, looking pleased and amazed at her evident enjoyment in enacting the bountiful hostess.

"Why, I thought you wouldn't have any objections, so, when I went into the grocer's to buy a teacup-full of salt, I purchased half a dozen apples, too ; they didn't cost much."

"Heavy purchases, truly!" laughed Mr. Leroy. "I ho Mr. More has a good stock on hand or he will soon be ri ashore, if all his customers make as heavy drains on it as yo have done."

"O, it wasn't he I bought the things of—he wasn't in—bu of a little girl, not much bigger than I am, with such a queer looking face. One side of it was all puckered up, and the ey on that side didn't open at all, and the fingers of one hand were drawn up just like her face, and didn't open wide either. I felt so sorry for her! And, don't you think? a great coarse boy came tearing into the shop, almost running over me to get to the counter, and called out, 'Here, you baked-sweet-apple face, give us a twist of tebarker, (that's the way he pronounced it). I declare, I felt just like crying, to hear him speak to her in that way; but when I looked at her, though I didn't feel the least bit merry, I couldn't help laughing. I know you are thinking it was very wrong of me, aren't you?"

"I should have thought," said he, gravely, "that *you* would have been the last one to laugh at a poor child's deformity, which she can not help."

"It wasn't *that*, Mr. Leroy; please not to think so badly of me; but her one eye was cross-eyed, and seemed to be looking away off into one corner of the shop, though her face was towards the boy who had been so impudent, and one corner of her mouth ran right up into the cheek that was so scarred. I really thought she was making up faces at him, until I saw a tear in her eye—I don't see how I could have been so unfeeling; I hope she didn't see me laugh. Do you suppose she always looked like that?"

"No, indeed; I remember, several years ago, Mrs. More's being in great trouble, about a frightful accident that had disfigured one of her children for life. I believe it worried the poor mother of the child to death, because she let the little one fall into a boiling kettle of fat, in which she was cooking doughnuts."

"What are those, Mr. Leroy?"

"A kind of pancake that people in this country are very fond

of. For my part, I'd as lief eat a gooseberry tart, or a tea-cake, fried in grease, but it won't do to say so out loud, for the Americans are dreadfully sensitive, and won't allow the least fault-finding, from foreigners, with their peculiar institutions. In our country, a man makes himself comfortable in his own way, without caring how it suits his neighbors, and they are welcome to the same privilege. But here, everybody is mortally afraid of what every other body thinks of him, and would be knocked all into pye to be talked about."

Ellen rose to remove the plates and provide fresh ones, although hardly able to reconcile the movement with her sense of dignity as presiding head of the table.

It was in vain that she attempted to carve the smooth-crusted pie; the knife's edge glided from off its surface as though it had been of porcelain. Mr. Leroy succeeded better, but cut the plate in two with the pie, helping himself to a moderate sized piece of the latter. Very determinately he attacked the uncompromising paste—apparently of about the consistency of hard-baked ship-bread—which only yielded inch by inch to the most obstinate dental assaults.

"Dear me," said Ellen, "I can't imagine what can be the matter with it; for I am sure I stirred it up with flour and water exactly as I saw the matron do at 'The Home'; it must be the fault of the tin baker; I never used one before."

Without arguing the matter, he took the first opportunity to slide the unyielding crust into his pocket, where it soon found its way into the swill-barrel, in the back yard.

"In just fifteen minutes I must go back to my work," he said, on returning to the kitchen.

"Then let us go into the sitting-room; the table can stand as it is until after you are gone."

He ensconced himself in an old-fashioned arm-chair, and she drew a low wooden stool as near to him as she could conveniently get it, and sat down thereon.

"Were you lonesome any, while I was gone?" he asked.

"Not a bit; I hadn't time to think of such a thing. But, O, Mr. Leroy, you do keep such queer things in your clothes

closet—broken suspenders ; buttons and buckles ; old rusty r zors ; holy stockings, and gloves without fingers ; worn o hats ; shabby coats, and shirts torn all to flitters !"

He laughed at the faithfulness of her inventory, saying, "Ye yes ; I've no doubt there are all sorts of rubbish there, which i would be better to burn up and get out of the way, if one coul but find time to do it. Perhaps you would like to make a bon fire of them when I am gone."

"Some of them are too good to burn ; they will do to go into the rag-bag ; where is it ?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I've the impression that I've seen one, somewhere about the house, some time or other ; but there's no knowing where to look for it, now. You'd better burn them up and save trouble."

"Oh, no ! I'll make one if I can't find the old one, for mamma always said (her lips quivered and her eyes filled at mention of the loved name,) that it was wrong to burn up anything that was useful, and rags are."

"Well, do as you like about it, only it seems to me that when you come here to spend the day, you ought to have some better amusement than making rag-bags for my old shreds and patches. You'd better look over all the old books you will find in that closet beside the chimney ; my mother used to be a great reader ; but I don't get much time for books, excepting late of an evening, and then I'm so tired that I'm rather apt to fall asleep before I know it, when I come to sit down before a warm fire."

"Did you live here when your mamma was alive ?"

"Certainly ! I owned this house then."

"Then how did you happen to sell it? If I am too inquisitive only just tell me so once, and I shall remember it."

"Not at all, my dear ; it seems really something like old times to have some one take interest enough in my affairs to enquire into them. The fact is, I thought I could do better than to work by the day, so I contracted to build a large stable (this was several years ago,) for a gentleman, and I took the job low, because labor was cheap, and I was young in the business and wished to establish a reputation as a first-rate mechanic. I

wasn't to have any pay till the stable was finished, and accepted by the owner. I was a fool, with my means, to make such a bargain; but I did. It was in the Spring when the agreement was drawn up, but it was Fall before the house that stood on the land where the stable was to be built was ready for us to pull down, and times had changed greatly in the meantime."

"I made up my mind to sell out twenty-five shares of railroad stock, that I owned, to pay for the building materials I was obliged to pay cash for, and to buy the rest on six months, that is, not to give the money for them until half a year after they had been purchased, you know. But the stock had fallen to a tenth of what it cost me, and was dear at that, as the road did not have travel enough to pay its expenses—do you understand?"

"I believe so: you mean that because you was obliged to build in the Autumn instead of the Spring, the what-ever-it-was you owned on a railroad wouldn't sell at cost."

"Exactly," he said, looking pleased that she had so far comprehended him. "And, to make bad matters worse, lumber rose to a higher price than it had reached for years before; besides, there was a great deal of building going on, that Fall, in and about the city, and workmen were scarce. Taking it altogether I was making a desperate bad job of it. So, I went to the gentleman I had made the contract with, to beg of him to make the bargain a little easier for me, (you wouldn't understand how, if I told you,) which, as he was rich, he could have done, without feeling it. But he was one of that good sort of men, common enough in this country, who will give a hundred dollars to a popular benevolent society and make it up by cheating your eye teeth out of you, in what he calls a sharp trade. He declared that a bargain was a bargain, and left me to get out of mine in the best way I could, which was badly enough, I am sure: I lost all I was worth in the world, and went back to day-labor.—Good gracious! it is half-past two; I ought to have been back to my work long ago."

Seizing his coat, he thrust an arm into one sleeve, and, hat in

hand, went down stairs two steps at a time, and was out of the house in a twinkling.

On returning, at eventide, the sound of a great hissing and spluttering in the kitchen, at once drew him thither. The first sight he beheld, on opening the door, was that of Ellen standing on the hearth and holding out, at arm's length, a britannia tea pot, from a hole on one side of which, the liquid contents were streaming forth, over the bed of coals and ashes, filling the room with smoke and vapor. Laughing, in spite of himself, at the look of forlorn helplessness with which she watched the waste of the beverage which "cheers but not inebriates," as though quite incapable of making any effort to stop it, he hurried to her aid with a wash-bowl, in which he received the cause of all her trouble.

"O, Mr. Leroy, I am very, *very* sorry! You will think I do nothing but mischief, when I meant to have every thing so nice, *this* time."

"Never mind, Ellen, we must live and learn: I ought to have had something handier than that to make tea in long ago; and particularly so, now that I am to have a young lady visitor, occasionally, to pour my tea for me. We must have a little more decent-looking cover than the old one, with its black wooden knob, and a tow string to tie it to the handle. I'll just run out for a new one, before I take my coat off."

"How good you are," she said earnestly and with brightening face, as she raised her eyes to his own.

"Take care, or, I am so little used to flattery, you will make me vain," he said playfully, as he closed the door behind him, and briskly ran down stairs.

But few minutes had elapsed when he returned, bearing in his hand the dantiest little article in the tea-brewing line he had been able to procure, and which he encouragingly assured Ellen was fire-proof. The tea was once more placed to *draw*. She took some marvellously flat, thin biscuits from the baker, and placed them on the table.

"Hilloo! what are these?" he asked, taking one from the

plate, tossing it up against the ceiling and catching it in the rebound. "It would make a good ball if it were not so hard," he added, eyeing its unfractured surface; "you might make your fortune, Ellen, by going out to Mexico, where, according to last accounts, they are greatly in want of cannon-balls."

"I can't imagine why I don't succeed better in cooking, it must be the fault of the baker," she replied, rather dejectedly, but without the least sign of resentment.

"Practice maketh perfect," he said; "and I expect to be treated to no end of delicacies, the next time you come."

Tea being over, they returned to the sitting-room.

"I think it is going to rain," she said, pressing her face against a window-pane, and peering forth into the darkness: "I shouldn't like to go out this evening if it should be damp, on account of my cold: I wore my best shawl, too."

"Don't worry about that, for I will call a cab if it rains when it is time for you to go."

She did not look quite satisfied.

"I would ask you to stay all night," he said, "if I had any place for you to sleep."

"I will take care of myself, without giving you any trouble at all, if you will only say I may stay;" and she looked eagerly in his face. If she had detected thereon so much as a single shade of unwillingness to have her remain, she would have gone without a word of expostulation; but he only said:

"I should like to see how and where you are going to make yourself comfortable for the night, before I consent to your remaining."

"I will show you, for I planned it all this afternoon, if you didn't object;" and she hurried away to the kitchen, closing the door after her. In a few minutes she opened it, saying simply—"Come and see."

There were six chairs, ranged in two parallel lines, facing each other and so near as to touch. On these were placed a sheet folded through the middle; a blanket and comforter, headed by a respectably plethoric pillow, which, as he lifted it up for a

closer inspection, disgorged itself of an old flannel vest, a couple of ragged shirts and an half-filled rag-bag.

She raised them from the floor, replacing them in the pillow-case with an air of unruffled gravity.

"Do you never laugh, Ellen?"

"Sometimes—you forget this morning—but not often, now-a-days. It seems wrong, with poor mamma away off in the frightful sea. I can almost see her in her white night-dress, with her beautiful, long hair swept back and forth by the waves. If I could only know where she lay, and go and lay flowers on her grave, as I used to on sister Bessie's, what a comfort it would be! But I can remember her and mourn for her just as well as it is. I don't mean it is for *her* I mourn, for she is in Heaven, but for myself, because I shall never see her again, unless I am good enough to go there, too. That's why I like to stay here, brother Laurence, because I can think of her as much as I like, and cry the load off, here, (pressing her hand to her heart), without all the girls watching me."

"You shall stay as long as you like, Ellen," he said, in a subdued tone, as he followed her into the sitting-room.

There he busied himself with his pen, nearly covering a sheet of paper with figures, in estimating the cost of erecting a dwelling-house, after a plan given him by his present employer, while Ellen busily pored over a book, at the opposite side of the stand. He finished his calculations, at last, and pushing aside the writing materials, asked:

"What story have you got there, that you are so much taken up with?"

"It is not a story at all, but a cookery book I found in the closet, and, Mr. Leroy," (her face beaming with the light of a new discovery), "I've found out what the pie-crust wanted—*shortening;* and the bread—yeast, or something to make it rise. And, besides that, I have learnt here how to make the loveliest little tea-cake—I shall try it to-morrow evening; and corn-cake for breakfast, only I shall want some eggs to make it with."

"Very well, I will get up early in the morning and run into the grocer's for a dozen, and I should like a part of them boiled, if you know how to do it."

"Yes, indeed, just three minutes by the clock, that is easier than any thing. Did I understand you that I might stay here as long as I liked, Mr. Leroy?"

"That was what I said."

"Would a week be too long?"

"You are to be the judge of that; if you should happen to get lonely and homesick, I should rather think it would."

"I couldn't do that, because this seems more like home to me than any other place; and there are so many things that need doing, I should like to stay till I have seen to every one of them. I found a trunk full of old woolens, all alive with moths, this afternoon."

"Ah! they will answer excellently well for your bonfire, won't they?"

"The moths will, but woolen rags will sell."

"What an economical little woman you are! At this rate, all my good-for-nothing, old duds will be turned into silver before you go away. Half past nine," he added, looking up at the clock; "isn't it about time little folks were abed?"

With much dignity and paternal kindness of demeanor, he kissed her cheek, calling her "sister Nelly," as he bade her a cheerful "Good-night."

Carrying her lamp very carefully, she went away to her unique couch, her head filled with pleasing schemes for his comfort on the morrow, and her heart as alive to happy impulses as it could well be, with the shadow of the dead mamma brooding over it, and shutting out the sunshine of joy.

She rose early next morning, and, not wishing to disturb Mr. Leroy, after quietly lighting the fire, she softly slipt out, with the money left from the trifling purchases of the previous day, for the eggs she was in need of. As she stept into the grocery, Jane More, the one-eyed girl, was blowing into the front of a jammed and rusty stove, from which volumes of thick smoke

puffed forth in her face. She wiped her eye on a corner of h apron, while Ellen kindly bade her "Good-morning."

"You needn't take the trouble to be polite to me; nobo does," was the discourteous reply.

"It is no trouble to me," said Ellen, softly, "and I am su I am very sorry for you if people treat you rudely."

"Everybody thinks that they have a right to pity *me*. I'd a lief they'd tell me, right to my face, they think I am a hideou looking fright, and they are thankful they aren't such monster of ugliness; that's just what they all do think, I know, and I hate them for it."

She looked Ellen full in the face, while wrapping the eggs she had called for in a paper, although her eye, as usual, seemed seeking for something in a far corner of the shop. The latter instinctively shrank from her; it was not physical, but moral, deformity from which her pure nature recoiled.

"I see how it is," cried the girl, with a harsh laugh; "but how can you help hating what is hateful? How did you get that twist in your back?"

"I met with an accidental fall when I was quite young."

"Lucky for you that it wasn't your pretty face that was spoiled. People will be willing to give you some show of kindness for the pleasure of looking at your handsome eyes and long curls: they don't give something for nothing in this selfish world. There's nothing pleasant to look at in *my* face, and it is little I get but abuse from any body. My father saves all his money, and all his kinds looks, for my pretty sister Elvira, and says, 'keep Jane drudging round, it's all she's fit for;' and aunt Huldah says, 'a pity she hadn't ha' died while she was a credit to the family.'"

Ellen was glad to get out of the shop: she breathed more freely in the open air. The girl's manner, so bitterly defiant, more than her words, chilled and oppressed her. It required all Mr. Leroy's warm commendation of the delicious corn-cakes she had been at so much pains to prepare for him, while he had indulged in an extra, morning nap, to reinstate her in her previous quiet cheerfulness.

"I shall work at home (somehow he called his lodgings 'home now, instead of 'my bachelor's den,' as he had been used to term them,) this afternoon," he said, on rising from the breakfast table.

Ellen did not attempt to conceal the delight this intelligence gave her, although stoutly persisting that she never thought of being lonely during his absence the preceding day.

He went into the store-room, where he was busy for some minutes selecting strips of board and plank from a loose pile of the same, and when he returned to the kitchen, Ellen had left it. Into the sitting-room he went, but there she was nowhere to be seen; it was but an instant before her head popped out from beneath the valance of the bed.

"For mercy's sake, child, what are you about, crawling round on your hands and knees in that style?"

"Why, I couldn't throw the counterpane over the bed smoothly, and so I had to crawl under, to pull it down at the back side. But, Mr. Leroy, it doesn't seem to me that your wash-woman gives your room so thorough a 'tidying-up' as you think for; look at the feathers and cobwebs sticking to my dress!" And she very composedly walked to the hearth and shook herself, before asking, "What is the use of having those old slippers, hat-boxes, and one thing and another, under the bed, to be right in the way of the broom in sweeping?"

"No use at all, only it's the handiest place that I know of to kick things into when I want to get them out of the way; I can't have them right in the middle of the floor, you know."

"Of course not; but may I arrange them in the closet? there is a plenty of spare room there, now that the rags are all out of it."

"You may turn and overturn whatever you can lay hands on; but I'm afraid you'll get enough of it if you undertake to put all my old traps in apple-pie order."

CHAPTER IV.

HOMELY EXPERIENCES.—EDUCATION.

When Mr. Leroy came home at noon, on the same day which our story left him, dinner was waiting for him, and Ell was out on the landing, peeping over the bannisters in anticip tion of his arrival. The outer door opened, and Ellen saw tw men enter, bearing some heavy object, then she heard Mr. L roy's voice giving them directions to proceed carefully throug the hall and up the staircase with their burden; and a dislike t being caught by strangers watching for his return, made her re treat hastily to the kitchen, whither they quickly followed her, depositing on the floor the different parts of a small, daintily turned, black-walnut bedstead. Mr. Leroy, tossing down a small cotton mattress, speedily aided the men in setting up the substitute for last night's couch of chairs, and counting some money into their palms, dismissed them.

"How do you like it?" he asked, turning with a smile to his *protégée*, as we may now safely call her.

Her declaration that it was the darlingest little sleeping establ shment she had ever seen, quite satisfied him, and picking up a brown paper parcel he began cutting the twine fastenings.

"Wait and let me untie it," cried Ellen; "I want the strings to hang up my rag-bag and other things."

Rather reluctantly he put by his jack-knife, but his impatience quickly subsided as he noticed the dexterity with which her small fingers undid the hard knots, quickly bringing to light the contents of the bundle.

"Mr. Leroy, now I have got a place to sleep in, have you any objections to my staying a week?" she asked, more solicitous to have this point finally decided, than curious as to what the roll in his hand contained.

"No; nor a month if you do not tire of playing hermitess in that time. But look! how do you think this will suit your com-

plexion ?" And folding a blue and crimson Scotch-plaid shawl all askew, he threw it over her shoulders. When he had sufficiently enjoyed her expressions of childish delight at the beauty of the gift, he further produced a knit jacket and hood, enjoining upon her the necessary precaution of donning them both, as often as she stepped outside the door, until her cough was entirely gone.

Swallowing his dinner with a haste supposed to be characteristic of our own countrymen, but perhaps no less so of England's, or any other nation's working classes, (thank Heaven ! to these classes, distinguished from each other by various forms of labor, physical and intellectual, with a few rare exceptions, our entire population belongs,) he betook himself to his work-bench. He had a reason for his more than ordinary expedition. Ellen, in the intervals of domestic employment, seated herself near him, on a log of wood he had placed for her, and watched, with pleased interest, the long smooth shavings, nearly as graceful as the flow of a lady's ringlets, which glided off from his plane.

"What are you making, Mr. Leroy ?"

"You shall see, by-and-by."

She waited very patiently, only now and then absenting herself for a brief time, until requested to bring a light : there being but one small window, high up in the room, it was early dark there. He fitted two upright posts, about six feet in height, into a couple of rudely shaped pedestals he had made to receive them, then joined then to each other by a couple of transverse slats, two yards and a half long. A second frame-work being constructed in the same way, he brought a roll of glazed cotton from the hall, and, cutting off a piece sufficiently large to cover them both, soon had it securely tacked on.

"Now take hold of one end of it, Nelly, it ain't heavy, and we'll carry it into the kitchen."

It was quickly placed parallel with the front side of the bed, at a short distance from it.

"Oh, I see what it is now, a screen you have been making for me. How very kind of you ! but what are you going to do with the other one ?"

"Help me bring it in, and you shall see."

"Put it across the foot! what a darling little bed-room! Isn't it nice?" she cried, her eyes fairly sparkling with delight.

"I thought it would be just the thing," he replied in a tone of great satisfaction, "and the kitchen is so large, we can very well spare the room."

"Now, brother Laurence," (this title was reserved for rare occasions, as though it had been too good for everyday use), "will you please to hang my new shawl—what a lovely plaid it is, just the right size for a little girl like me—over the top of the screen, and the hood on one post, and the jacket on the other, so that I can see them all at once!"

Her request having been laughingly complied with, she drew him by the hand to the other side of the hearth, to contemplate the effect of the new arrangement.

"How charming!" she said; "I like to be here, it is such a pleasant place, don't you think it is?"

He glanced out of the window: there was just light enough left to show him the naked clothes-lines on the top of the sheds, which looked drearily dark and damp, beneath the heavy leaden sky which threatened rain. Then as his gaze, returning, rested on the bright copper tea-kettle singing in cheery, drowsy monotone, suggestive of good things to come, he answered her question affirmatively, although quite sure that the sunshine of content, which made the homely room so pleasant, came not from without, and was wholly independent of place.

A month passed, and no more was said about Ellen's returning to the "Home." Mr. Leroy had become so accustomed to look up the staircase for the bright face he was sure to find waiting his return, together with a clean hearth, a cheerful fire in the grate, and the old easy chair wheeled into the warmest corner, with the slippers beside it, to say nothing of the thousand and one little attentions so quietly and unobtrusively offered, that he would have felt the withdrawal of these homely comforts as a painful deprivation.

"Ellen," said he abruptly, one evening, looking up from the plan at which, for full two hours, he had been steadily draught-

ing; "I suppose you ought to go to school; of course you ought: I wonder it hasn't occurred to me before."

"I would rather study at home, if you wouldn't mind hearing me recite my lessons: it wouldn't take up much of your time, if I learnt them very perfect," said Ellen with timid eagerness.

"I wouldn't mind the time," said Mr. Leroy, "but the fact is, I'm afraid I don't remember much about syntax and prosody, and as for geography, it is as much as ever that I can tell the difference between a cape and a promontory, so you see I shouldn't make much of a teacher."

"But all you will have to do," gently persisted Ellen, "will be to take the book, and look over after me, to see that I say the words right."

"But what if you don't understand them? who is to teach you?"

"I *will* understand them. Mamma used to say that it was much better to find out things for one's self, than to be told; and she used sometimes to keep me puzzling over a sum in arithmetic, for two or three days, (I always worked it out right at last), when it wouldn't have taken her five minutes to have shown me all about it, if she had thought best to do so."

"Very well, you can try studying at home then, and go to school afterwards, if you do not succeed."

But she did succeed, not only in understanding her lessons herself, but in making him comprehend them also, so that the hour he devoted to her recitations was by no means the least profitable in the twenty-four. * * * * *

Thus several years have passed by so quietly that no event is found in them worthy of record. Ellen's health has improved with her stature. Her face is no longer wan and pale, and her cheeks glow with a faint and delicate bloom. Her yellowish-brown curls are more luxuriant than ever. Her eyes would have been called blue, but they were of that deep and lustrous hue which the woodland violet wears in the shade; but with increase of height, her deformity was more palpably visible.

She had early shown an insatiable thirst for every species of knowledge that came within her reach. She had read through

Mr. Leroy's small collection of books, again and again, befo he thought of joining Burnham's circulating library, for her ben fit: perhaps it is as much for his own, for, since then, it has b come her invariable evening practice to detail, for his gratific tion, the substance of her readings, for the day. At one tim discoursing quite learnedly from some abstruse, psychologic work, (of use to her, in after years, when her intellect had ex panded to its full comprehension), whose sounding phrases rolle glibly from her practiced tongue; and, at another, enchaining her hearer's attention by a stirring narrative of hair-breadth 'scapes and marvellous adventure, culled from some old dog-eared volume of sea stories.

It was in one of those long, warm summer days, when Mr. Leroy returned from his work some hours before dark, that Ellen asked of him, as he threw himself into the easy chair, exchanging his thick shoes for slippers, "Who lives in the large house, straight back from our kitchen?"

"Mr. Avondale," was the reply; "I did some repairs for him once; but why do you ask?"

"Because I saw such a beautiful young lady there, at an open window; ours was open too, so I saw her quite plainly: she was making a wreath of small white flowers. She had such lovely hair, almost black, and looped up at the back of her head in broad, rich braids that fell on her neck. He fingers were long and taper, as one reads of in romances, and her lips redder than coral: it was a treat to look at her.

"She saw me, too, and bowed at me, just as I was going to move away from the window, not to seem rude by staring at her too long."

"She was very kind, I am sure."

"Yes, kind, and proud as well! She didn't nod familiarly, but bent her head condescendingly, as if knowing very well that she was worth looking at, and not grudging that pleasure to one so far beneath her as poor I."

"You must have had considerable help from fancy, in discovering so much across two back yards. I presume the young lady you saw was Miss Laura, the only daughter of Mr. Avondale.

It's not many years, so I have been told, since he earnt his two dollars a day as a journeyman tailor; now he does a heavy jobbing business, on Kilby Street. He must have been remarkably successful to be able to live in the extravagant style his family keep up. I would like to have you see the opposite side of the house; it is handsomely faced with stone, and fronts on a broad, airy street. Put on your bonnet, and we will walk round that way, if you would like to look at it."

"Please to wait half an hour later and I will be delighted to go with you; it will be so much pleasanter to walk in the deepening twilight, when there are fewer people on the sidewalks."

After tea they accordingly sallied forth, and were slowly sauntering, for the second time, past the stately dwelling of the Avondales, when an elegant, private carriage drew up to the sidewalk, and, a moment later, the outer door of the house was held open by a colored servant,—such, at least, he seemed to be, —while a tall, well-formed gentleman, of thirty or thereabouts, —aristocratic, from his subdued, impassive manners to the nothing-too-good-for-me expression of his whole countenance—handed down the steps the beautiful girl who had been the subject of their recent discourse.

"Drive a little nearer to the curb-stone," he called out, in imperious accents, to the coachman, on perceiving that Miss Avondale could not reach the carriage-step without setting her delicately-slippered foot upon the pavement.

The order promptly obeyed, the young lady was assisted into the carriage; not, however, until she had first recognized Ellen by a slight bend of the head, and the stranger gentleman had looked so boldly into the eyes of the latter that she was fain to veil them by her long lashes, while her cheeks glowed, half in bashfulness and half in indignation.

The carriage was whirled off, and the only trace left by its fair occupant, was a faint fragrance of "new-mown-hay," which perfumed the air for a brief space, then floated off on a breath of the breeze.

Ellen turned for a *last look* at the lofty dwelling, and saw,

between the folds of brocatelle curtaining the clear plate glass of its large bay window, a man lighting the wax-candles in the girandoles. An oval table of dark-veined marble, strewn with costly trifles in mosaic, bronze, and alabaster, stood in a corner of the room; and beside it sat a lady, scarcely on the wrong side of forty, somewhat proud of bearing, but with a look of care on features still handsome, and not without an expression of cordial geniality. She was holding an open volume, richly bound, between her jewelled fingers, without, however, looking at its pages.

"What a beautiful drawing-room," said Ellen, with a keen sense of enjoyment at the sight; "I am sure Miss Avondale seems to have everything—beauty, wealth, and friends—to make her happy."

"When you have lived as long as I have," said Mr. Leroy, philosophically, looking down upon Ellen from the moral elevation to which his superior wisdom and experience was supposed to have raised him, "you will find that living in a splendid house, with a plenty of attendants, isn't enough to make a person happy, or anything like it: the richest man I ever worked for, was a wretched hypochondriac."

"I don't think I exactly know what that is."

"And I don't know as I can exactly explain to you; but I know Mr. Sears was forever imagining himself to be dying with all sorts of diseases, and was always turning off old doctors and calling in new ones, because they couldn't find out as anything was the matter with him. Then his spirits were at the very lowest ebb, from dread of some evil that was going to, or might, happen. I never saw such a deplorable length of countenance as he wore, constantly, on any other mortal man: it was enough to make you down-hearted for a week just to look at him."

Their walk soon brought them to Mr. More's shop and dwelling, both beneath the same roof. At an open window of the latter, sat a young lady, engaged with some species of light needlework, and dressed with a greater regard to show than to either taste or elegance, so Ellen's artistic eye at once informed

her. Without seeming to be aware that Mr. Leroy and his companion were looking at herself, she glanced across the street to an opposite window, in which stood a fair-haired child, bestowing on the little fellow a bow and smile of extreme graciousness, thus finding occasion for the display of a white and even row of teeth, and a pretty set of dimples: then bending over her work, she handled her needle daintily, thus attracting attention to an arm not badly formed, and somewhat larger than the good-sized walking-stick to which an American girl's arm has been wont to be likened. Mr. Leroy turned his head over his shoulder to look back at her, saying in a low tone to Ellen as he did so:

"It is Elvira More, but so improved, I scarcely knew her: she has really a very fine figure."

There was something in the words, Ellen herself could have scarcely told what, that painfully recalled the consciousness of her own deformity. From some inexplicable reason (who but its Maker can trace the subtle windings of the human heart?) she entered the house in a less cheerful and contented frame of mind than she had left it.

Mr. Leroy, seated at the stand and busy with his pencil, now and then looked up, to note the quiet, even sad, thoughtfulness with which she gazed at the book she held, without opening its leaves, feeling assured that, in time, she would unfold to him the cause of her unwonted depression. She was so long silent, that, waxing impatient, he asked, abruptly, "What are you thinking of, Ellen?"

"Of Miss More, the young lady we saw sitting at the window," she answered frankly.

"Ah! I had quite forgotten her; how happens it that she has occupied your thoughts so long?"

Ellen looked irresolute for a minute, but she was incapable of the meanness of dissimulation, and then replied, with flushed cheeks and downcast eyes: "I am afraid I am envious of her it is such a desirable thing to be able to please one's friends, outwardly, in figure, I mean, that"——

She stopped short, unwilling or unable to go on.

"Ellen! do you wish to sour your disposition? to poison your happiness? if not, drive such thoughts away from you."

"So I did, but they came back again: was I to blame for that?" she asked, almost passionately, with tears in her eyes.

"I shall answer you," he said more gently than he had previously spoken, "in the words of one better able to teach you on such points than I am: 'We cannot prevent the birds of the air from flying over our heads, or even alighting thereon, but we can hinder their building nests in our hair.'"

"And that means, I suppose," she said, after revolving the reply a few minutes in her mind, "that if we cannot prevent evil thoughts from flitting across our minds, we can drive them away before they have time to make themselves homes there."

"Exactly! I am glad you understood me so readily."

He resumed his pencil, and when, a short time after, he looked up, and saw the serene, self-gratulatory look that had taken the place of the cloud on her face, he felt assured that, for the time, she had conquered in that struggle with evil which every being created in the divine Image must daily and hourly wage, if he would win through to the celestial gaol at last.

Twilight had set in—how different from the one last described!—on a chill day in October, when a low tap brought Ellen to the door of their snug sitting-room, and she was surprised by the entrance of Miss Elvira More.

"I thought," said the latter, "that you must be so horridly stupid, in here all alone, that I would take mercy on you, and run in for a little chat."

Ellen thanked her, rather coldly, it is true; for, now she came to look more closely at the pretty face, with its charming dimples and fresh clearness of complexion, she did not fail to notice the high forehead, narrow and receding, the full, loose lips and disproportionately small, weak chin of her guest, and to opine that she should derive but little pleasure from the acquaintanceship.

"Well, so you keep hermit's hall here, through the day," directly began Miss More. "Is Mr. Leroy any relation to you?"

"Not any, the most distant."

"How queer that he should take a fancy to keep you shut up here, alone! I suppose he buys all your clothes, and that sort of thing, doesn't he?"

Ellen assented with a blush: the question, thus propounded, made her see the subject in a different light from any it had ever worn before.

"He isn't a lover, is he?" asked Miss Elvira, looking very arch.

"He seems like a brother to me, and is as kind as though he really were so," replied Ellen with dignified reserve.

"He can afford to be so," said Elvira, spitefully, for she resented Ellen's coldness of manner; "for he couldn't hire a housekeeper for less than three dollars a week: you cook his meals and keep his rooms in order, besides seeing that his clothes are kept mended, I presume." And she looked inquiringly at Ellen, who bent her head with a distant coolness, calculated to check a familiarity even more distasteful to her than the repellant manners of the younger sister. This coolness of demeanor, however, was quite thrown away upon the obtuse perceptions of her visitor.

"Lord! how I do hate housework," she cried; "it is so vulgar. I used to have plenty of it to do when I lived at home, though father always kept help; but then Irish girls are so nasty (we always get them right off the ship they come over in, so as to be sure that they haven't half a dozen beaux to be bothering round, it's *so* disgusting to have beaux in the kitchen), it is as much as one person ought to do to look after them; and I was glad enough to accept my aunt's invitation to go and live with her at Roseville. She thinks all creation of me, and would rather work her fingers to the bone, any time, than call upon me to help her: if it hadn't ha' been for *that*, I wouldn't have staid with her a week, for, Lord! of all the stupid places I ever was in, in my life, Roseville is the worst. Not a beau worth looking at, in the whole village! all the shopkeepers old as Methuselah, with lots of old-maid daughters, and all the sons gone to Canton or California! I suppose it was a good

thing for me, my staying there, however; at least I have been told several times, since I came back, that the roses of my complexion were much brighter than those of city girls, in general. I've come to the conclusion, though, since my return, that it is about as bad to have too many admirers as it is to have none: it is *so* disagreeable not to be able to step into the street, without having somebody or other waiting to walk with you, when you would much rather go by yourself."

Having no conception of this sort of thing, Ellen attempted neither sympathy nor consolation, but, after a time, in obedience to an impulse of courtesy which prompted her to say something to her guest, she enquired what had induced her return to the city.

"Because my aunt concluded to go and keep house for a distant relative," replied Miss More; and thinking that Ellen's inquiry gave to herself full license to question her as minutely as she chose, in return, she began by asking—

"What is behind those screens in the corner?"

"A bed," was Ellen's concise rejoinder.

"Whose is it, yours?"

"No; Mr. Leroy's."

"Where do you sleep?"

"In a small chamber that leads off the same landing as this room."

"Do you have much company?"

"Very little; occasionally Mr. Leroy brings some old acquaintance home to tea with him."

"Does he stay at home with you evenings?"

"Almost always."

"What do you do to make the long evenings pass away?"

"When he isn't busy, he hears my lessons and whatever else I have been reading."

"How *slow!* don't you go to theatres, or concerts, or anything?"

"Very seldom; I know Mr. Leroy is tired when he comes home from his work, and so I never ask him to go out with me."

"Lord, how stupid! I should as lief be buried alive! Don't you even go out to walk?"

"Sometimes I do, in the pleasant twilight, on quiet streets."

"Of course; one can't blame *you* for not preferring Washington Street; for, though *I* always choose that, of all others, it is so gay and crowded with people one likes to meet, I shouldn't go there at all if they were going to stare at me for any personal *peculiarity*, you know; (glancing significantly at Ellen's shoulders.) As to being looked out of countenance, it is what every one who is anyway better looking than the crowd must learn to expect; as Mr. Maxton remarked to me, yesterday. But, as I was going to say, when I go out with Jane, (I invariably shake her off if I can,) I always choose the most out-of-the-way courts and lanes I can find, to walk in."

A burning flush rose to Ellen's cheeks; but, glancing at Miss More, and discovering on her face not the slightest trace of ill-natured malice, she said to herself—"Not having quick sensibilities, Miss Elvira is, of course, unaware of their existence in others; I am very foolish to be wounded by words of whose sting *she* is utterly unconscious."

"Do you think Mr. Leroy good looking?" abruptly asked Miss More.

"Whether he *looks* so, or not, he *is* a good man," said Ellen, confidently.

"Oh, I dare say; but I think he would be really handsome if he didn't wear such horrid old-fashioned whiskers. Lord! nobody *could* look decent with the beard chopped square off, at the corners of the mouth, when it is the latest touch to wear the chin covered. I think an imperial or goatée is perfectly delightful."

"Will you let me tell you, in kindness, Miss More, that you use one word that gives me pain, every time I hear it? If you had a revered friend—a beloved benefactor, to whose munificence you owed everything you enjoyed—you surely would shrink from hearing his name disrespectfully uttered."

"Lord! you needn't be so techy; I didn't mean any disrespect to your beloved Mr. Leroy by not admiring the cut of his whiskers."

"It was not Mr. Leroy I thought of, but there is One whom

I—whom *we*, ought to love and reverence more than any create being : it is *His* name I cannot bear to hear lightly spoken."

"Good gracious! (if that suits you any better,) what quee notions you have, of your own, to be sure; it is a very commo way of speaking, and I never thought of there being any harn in it."

Mr. Leroy came home at this juncture, and Miss More's whole attitude and bearing changed *instanter*. With the most charming air of confusion, she declared she had not the remotest idea it was time for his return, or he would not have found her there.

Mr. Leroy gallantly hoped he should not be the means of driving away so fair a guest, and Miss Elvira colored and drew her scarf about her shoulders, with one of the many graceful little airs she had always at command. Her apparently diffident reserve piqued his curiosity, and gave her an interest in his eyes she would not otherwise have acquired. Ellen was but coolly civil, and perhaps it was to atone for her want of cordiality that he strove to enact the agreeable for Miss More's entertainment. She rewarded his efforts by blushes, dimples, and monosyllables. Thanks to Ellen's caution, she no longer profaned that holy name which should never be breathed but in accents of adoration.

On rising to go, after declining Mr. Leroy's invitation to remain to tea, Miss More was very affectionate in her parting salutation to Ellen, putting her arm about her, while kissing that young lady's cheek, and thus exhibiting her own warm-hearted amiability, in striking contrast with the unbending frigidity of the insensible Ellen, who merely tolerated the embrace.

"Dear me," thought the latter, as Mr. Leroy left the house on escort duty to their departing caller, "how strange it is that a girl like Elvira More, with so little trouble, can hoodwink, in this way, a man of Mr. Leroy's penetration! Is it possible that, with the nobler endowments of the sterner sex, they have yet been denied that intuitive insight into character, which is woman's peculiar gift, in compensation for her inferiority in intellectual strength?" (this inferiority had been so firmly asserted, in one form or another, in so many of the books she had read, that Ellen never thought of doubting its reality). "Is it, that she has

been endowed with those finer and subtler perceptions which reveal to her favored vision many a lightning glimpse of truths" (a confession to this effect she had read also, in the writings of a 'strong-minded *man*,' too,) "which man only reaches, after groping for years, in painful search, aided by those slow crutches—his boasted reasoning powers?"

She put these thoughts away from her, with a smile at her folly in giving herself up to surmises so utterly profitless, even if she had been capable of solving them, (which she was not,) and went about preparations for tea.

"A very warm-hearted, unsophisticated girl, Miss More," said Mr. Leroy, on his return, "but extremely diffident."

Ellen's reply was so evasive and unsatisfactory, that he asked, quickly—

"Are you still envious of her?"

"Not in the least," said Ellen, looking him so frankly in the face that he was forced to believe her.

"She seems to feel the utmost kindness towards you," he continued, "and I shall be very glad to have you have one friend, at least, of your own sex, and nearly your own age."

She was silent, and he perplexed, almost irritated.

"If your being shut up here so long by yourself has destroyed the relish which young people naturally feel for society, it has done you an ill turn, indeed. It is not good for man, or woman either, to be alone; they lose all sympathy for their species. You must impart to Miss More your taste for reading, and, with her sweet manners and warmth of disposition, she will be just the companion you need; she seems to feel a great interest in you, and thought it the worse thing in the world for you to be left so much by yourself, with no one to cheer or enliven you. I am inclined to think she is right, and I have invited her to come in often and see you."

Poor Ellen, what could she say? an intuitive, delicate sense of womanly propriety forbade the avowal of her real opinion regarding Miss More, and you may be sure the latter failed not to avail herself of Mr. Leroy's invitation.

CHAPTER V.

THE BIRTHDAY GIFT.

Mr. Leroy's twenty-seventh birthday was approaching, many were the half hours Ellen had spent revolving in her various plans for procuring the means for buying him some p gift, suitable for the occasion, but always with the same un factory result. She might easily have appropriated a portic the money weekly placed in the drawer for household exp to the accomplishment of her darling project, but the id making a person a present out of his own earnings struck h simply absurd.

Happening to go into an embroidery shop, for the pur of a bit of muslin for a new neck-frill, she noticed a lady s ing with her back towards her, but whom she instantly r nized, by her graceful mien and the somewhat lofty carria her head, as Miss Avondale. The latter was standing w pattern of elaborate and fanciful design between her taper, gloved fingers, which pattern she wished to have embroi upon some delicate lace flouncing, lying upon the counter.

"Really," said the polite shop-woman, "although there one it would give me greater pleasure to oblige than yo I do not see how I can possibly get this done for you b time you require it, as we are very much hurried at this se there is no one amongst my girls excepting Florelle wh could trust to do it, and she is so overrun with work, th has to sit up half the night, as it is; she is so worn out, couldn't think of putting anything more upon her, lest I s lose her services altogether."

"Was it she who wrought Flora Steptoe's blonde robe?

"I have no one else with me who could have done it."

"I dare say; it was perfect; quite equal to the magni zephyr robe Miss Villers brought home with her from Positively, Madame Bercault, Florelle *must* do my flou

I have made up my mind to wear them to the military ball, on New-year's eve. Do not shake your head, but name your own price and accede to my wishes, there's a good creature."

Ellen, although she had twice been asked if she would look at anything more, and both times replied in the negative, still lingered, and finally found courage to say to the shop-woman, "I think I could embroider that pattern to suit you, if you would be good enough to trust me with the job."

"I do not know you," replied Madame Bercault, in a very different tone from the one she had used in addressing her wealthy customer; "the lace is too costly to be trusted to an irresponsible person, about whose work I know nothing."

"I wrought this," said Ellen, hastily, while with trembling fingers she removed the lace collar from her neck, and held it across the counter.

"Exquisite," pronounced both voices in a breath.

Miss Avondale, for the first time, turned towards Ellen, greeting her with a scarcely perceptible bend of the head.

"To whom can you refer us for a good character of yourself?" asked the cautious shop-woman, in a rather more kindly tone than she had previously used.

"Let her choose the material she needs, and please to charge them in my bill; I will hold myself responsible for their safe return," promptly replied Miss Avondale, in a proudly careless, but decisive, tone.

The question had taken Ellen so much by surprise that she had been embarrassed for a reply, and thanking Miss Avondale, by words as well as looks, for coming so speedily to her relief, she took the bundle which had been quickly made up for her and left the shop.

"What a lovely little creature! it is a thousand pities she is deformed," languidly remarked Miss Avondale, tossing over the gossamer-like fabrics displayed for her inspection.

About six weeks later in the season, the last-named young lady might have been seen listlessly reclining on a luxurious couch covered with purple velvet, in an elegantly appointed drawing-room—the same one, in fact, that had so strongly ex-

cited Ellen's admiration, as seen through its large bay-window, on a previous occasion. Miss Avondale was richly dressed in a dark green silk, with polka spots of brilliant crimson, a tasselled cord of the same hue circling her slender waist, and awaited alone—the maternal relative being absent on a shopping expedition—the advent of those casual morning callers who were wont to drop in occasionally, and wile away a few minutes of the time which, at this period of the day, was apt to hang somewhat heavily on their hands.

A servant opened the door, and handed her a delicately enamelled card.

"Mr. Eglistoun; admit him, of course," said Miss Avondale, rising and smoothing the folds of her dress.

He was one of the privileged few to whom the family were always "at home," unless actually absent.

She colored slightly, on going forward to receive him, but on noting his cool air of assurance, almost instantly regained composure.

After discussing the weather, making mutual inquiries after the health of relatives, and canvassing the merits and defects of the latest *debutante* at the opera, conversation began to flag. Evidently, Mr. Eglistoun had called with the expectation of being entertained, and had not the remotest intention of exerting himself to start topics of discourse.

Although fully alive to the honor of receiving a morning call from a gentleman of Mr. Eglistoun's social pretensions, Miss Avondale can scarcely be said to have regretted the interruption of their languishing *tête-à-tête*, caused by the appearance of a servant, who came to say that a young woman, calling herself Ellen Verne, had brought home some needlework, which she requested to give, in person, to Miss Avondale.

"Where is she, Stimpson?"

"Down in the basement, Miss."

"Very well; you may go. Excuse me a few moments, Mr Eglistoun, while I go and speak with her; I will be back directly."

"But why give yourself the trouble of going down to *her*?

make her come to *you*, by all means. With your permission, I will look over a book of prints during the reception."

"Thank you; here, Stimpson, show the young woman up."

With trembling timidity, Ellen entered the spacious drawing-room which, in connection with a smaller one opening out of it, and a long vista of library and music-room still farther back, formed a suite of apartments more sumptuous than anything of the kind she had ever before beheld.

Miss Avondale hastened to unroll the small bundle placed in her hands, exclaiming, as she threw the long bands of cobweb-like lace over her arm, "Exquisite! perfectly lovely! did you ever see anything so delicately wrought as this vine, with its clusters of buds and leaves, Mr. Eglistoun? hand it to him, if you please, Miss Verne."

Ellen did as requested, but not before having recognized, in Mr. Eglistoun, the gentleman who had stared at her so rudely on another occasion.

"Perfectly lovely!" he repeated after Miss Avondale, looking all the while full in Ellen's face (she had unwittingly taken such a position as to screen him from view of the former lady), instead of at the embroidery she held towards him. Much to her own vexation, she felt herself changing color, as she became conscious, despite the drooping lids that nearly veiled her downcast eyes, of the bold gaze he had fastened on her features.

"Excuse me a moment; I have left my portemonnaie up stairs," said Miss Avondale, leaving the room as she spoke.

"My dear creature, you must be fatigued, standing so long; pray be seated."

There was something in the tone of easy familiarity with which these words were uttered, that Ellen intuitively felt to be offensive.

"Thank you; I prefer remaining as I am," she coldly replied; at the same time discrediting her assertion by changing her position so as to increase the distance between them.

Raising to his eye a superbly mounted lorgnette, he coolly scanned her whole contour of face and figure; a curious smile curbing his lip, as he saw, by her varying color that, although

studiously avoiding to look in his direction, she was not only aware of his pertinacious gaze, but was deeply annoyed thereat. With a quick movement of impatience, she turned her head still farther away from him, bringing the side of her bonnet, as a screen, between them.

"How *can* you be so cruel?" he asked, in a tone of languid amusement, "as to shut me out from the light of so sweet a countenance?"

She said nothing, but continued to look at a picture hanging on the wall,—a copy from Correggio's celebrated "holy family," —the contemplation of which would have given her intense delight, had she not been too much disturbed to give it her undivided attention. Not that she was humiliated in her own esteem, by the insolence of one bearing the outward stamp of a gentleman;—she had learned, before this, that something more than this mere outward impress is necessary to constitute the *real* gentleman—noble, manly, chivalric, above doing a meanness; in velvet or in fustian, one to whom Nature has given the seal of nobility: the tears she crushed beneath her lids were called up by wounded feeling and quick resentment.

"You feel the warmth of the room, uncomfortably, do you not, Miss Verne?" asked Miss Avondale kindly, as, on reëntering the room, she glanced at Ellen's flushed and burning cheeks. "Only seventy," she added, turning to a thermometer wreathed in pearls.

Mr. Eglistoun was apparently too much absorbed in looking at a drawing which he had drawn from a portfolio, to heed what was passing.

Ellen, of course, was not guilty of the impropriety of breaking in upon his preoccupied thoughts, by bidding him "Good morning," as she left. Had she done so, he would, very possibly, have greeted her with a look of haughty surprise at her ignorant temerity in presuming to address him, and would quite likely, after her departure, have inveighed against the impertinent familiarity of underbred people. * * * * *

It was past the middle of the short December afternoon, before Ellen found time to set forth in quest of the much-thought-

of birth-day gift. (Vest patterns, satin-bowed cravats, and rich, silk neck-cloths were cursorily examined, through the windows of numerous "gentlemen's furnishing stores," and still she sauntered, "fancy free," down Washington Street. At Warren's she made a full pause. A cashmere, of a rich camel's-hair green, with a small palm-leaf figure in crimson and blue, was exactly the article she wanted. Entering the shop, and ascertaining that the fabric was not too costly for her means, she purchased the required amount, and with it in her arms, hurried back towards home, for the sun was near his setting, and the evening shadows lengthening fast.

She was quite out of breath when she reached the tailor's shop, in the street leading from their own, whence Mr. Leroy usually ordered his clothing.

Raising the latch, she went in; bowing as she crossed the threshold, to the wiry little man, with the broad mouth, a sharp chin, a highly inquisitive, turned-up nose, a billious expression of countenance, and a pair of as rat-like, keen, twinkling little eyes, as ever looked out from beneath a human brow, who sat cross-legged on a table.

"Your most obedient, Marm; what can I sarve you with?"

"Have you Mr. Leroy's measure, so that you could cut him a dressing-robe, without his calling here?"

"Wal, I shouldn't wonder. It's only by luck and chance, though, that I happen to have it, for I never keep 'em on hand; but Mr. Leroy ordered a frock-coat last week; seems to me he's getting tremendous dressy 'long back. He buys twice as much of me as he did one spell."

"I am so glad you have the measure!" cried Ellen, quite regardless of the tailor's observation. "I hope you can have the robe ready for me by to-morrow evening."

"Wal, I don't know; I'm poorty busy just now. You only want me to cut it, do you?"

"That is all; I can make it myself, and I must have it all done by this day week."

She handed him the roll of cashmere.

"What have you got for the lining?" he asked, unfolding it, and throwing it over the counter behind him.

"Ah, the lining! it never occurred to me that I should want any. What shall I do? it is too late for me to go and look for it to-night."

"I've got some red, twilled cotton, two shillings a yard, warranted not to fade. I shouldn't wonder if 'twas just the thing you want."

"Let me look at it, if you please."

He got down from the table, and hobbled across the shop with a strange, uneven, up-and-down sort of gait, for one of his "nether supporters" was half a yard, more or less, shorter than the other. This inequality seemed rather an advantage than otherwise, at least, so Ellen concluded, when she saw with what dexterity he raised himself on his longer leg, to search on a top shelf, for what he had been unable to find on the lower ones.

"Here it is," he said, throwing down a roll of cotton and dropping suddenly from his high and mighty altitude into the contracted dimensions of a short man.

"Mr. Leroy lives with his mother, I believe," he said, in a tone of inquiry, as he slowly unfolded the roll.

"No, sir; she died a number of years since."

"I want to know if she did: then, where does he live now? if I may be so bold."

"In the same house he lived in, when his mother was alive."

"He don't keep house, I suppose?"

"He does, sir. This cotton is admirable: I could have selected nothing that would have suited me better. You keep wadding, also, do you not?"

"I will show you some. So, Mr. Leroy has really gone to housekeeping. How does he manage to get along without his mother?"

"Oh, we contrive to get along very comfortably," she replied carelessly.

"Then you live with Mr. Leroy!"

"Certainly," said she, returning his look of surprise.

"You two, all alone, and no one else?"

"No one else," echoed Ellen, blushing, she scarcely knew why, and feeling half offended, less at his questions, than at the tone of impertinent curiosity in which they had been asked.

"Is Mr. Leroy any related to you ?"

"I call him brother ; he is so by adoption."

"But none related, really ?"

"None ; *(impatiently)*, use any kind of wadding you choose, I am too much in haste to look at it."

As he turned on the door-step, after closing the door behind her, her foot slipping, she caught at an eave-spout, to save herself from a fall, missed it, and plunged, head-foremost, into a gentleman's outstretched arms, which closed tightly about her.

With a stifled shriek of terror, she struggled vainly to free herself from the unwelcome embrace.

"Hush ! my disdainful beauty ! I dreamed not, when I started forth, that kind fortune would so soon have driven you to my arms."

"Let me go, oh, Mr. Eglistoun, let me go !" she cried, scarcely less terrified than before, on recognizing his voice.

"Your pardon, sweetest, but know you not man must be more than mortal to cast from him the good the fates accord ?"

He cast a hasty glance over his shoulder ; the short winter twilight was rapidly deepening into darkness—a lamplighter, at the farther end of the street, was ascending a ladder ; no other person was in sight—the shutters of the shop, opposite which he stood, were already closed—he attempted to kiss her. She shrieked aloud, in uncontrolable terror, still a close prisoner in his arms' firm clasp.

He released her instantly, and, for a moment, she continued to lean on him, without power of motion.

"You had better accept the support of my arm," he said, offering it to her, with a more respectful air than he had hitherto thought proper to assume, "or you may get a serious fall on this glare sidewalk."

Without a word she glided over the curb-stone, and with hasty but faltering steps walked away in the street.

His eyes followed her, until she was lost in the darkness, with

a look of unequivocal admiration, and he muttered to himself—"She is a rare gem. How she trembled in my arms! I'd wager my diamond pin she was never kissed, passionately, in her life."

Turning, he entered the tailor's shop.

"I have called," he said, patronizingly, "to order a new suit for my tiger; something flashy, with gilt buttons, a little on the livery order, as much as possible in contrast with the subdued tones of color gentlemen affect. By the way, this green cashmere is just the thing for the lining of the new Russia-robe I intend ordering."

"It doesn't belong to me, sir; it was just left here by a young woman to be cut out for her sweet-heart, or what-ye-may-call-him."

"The young girl I met at the door?" asked Mr. Eglistoun, carelessly, and without the slightest show of interest.

"The same, sir; did you happen to look at her close? Ha'n't she got a sweet, poorty face, though?"

Mr. Eglistoun made no reply; what business had a mere trumpery tradesman to inquire into *his* tastes?

"She's wonderful sweet and innocent looking, for that sort of a person," continued the knight of the scissors and thimble, with a facetious grin.

"You're an evil-minded old fool, Burr; she's not 'that sort of a person,' or anything like it," retorted Mr. Eglistoun, with languid insolence, as he selected a gilt braid for a crimson vest; not deeming it worth his while to waste energy of expression on one so far beneath him in the social scale.

"I beg your pardon, I am sure," said the seemingly humbled Burr, who was far too politic to resent hard words from his most profitable customer, "and I shouldn't have said a word about the young lady, if I had known her to have been an acquaintance of your'n."

"I have seen her, and that is enough, for a person with a grain of penetration, and a skull no thicker than a beetle's," said Mr. Eglistoun, as if tired of the subject.

"I only know," persisted Mr. Burr, "what she told me with

her own lips, that she lives, all alone, with a single man—a Mr. Leroy. Why does she call him brother, too, when he a'n't none related to her, if 'tisn't to throw dust in people's eyes? I a'n't a talking man, myself, but I generally keep my eyes peeled, to see what is going on about me."

"You'd better be minding your own business," was the complimentary rejoinder, which was graciously received by the obsequious tailor, who forthwith retaliated by making a mental addition of ten per cent. to the price of the tiger's suit, just ordered. In this country, the man who would be haughty and overbearing to his inferiors in social position, must needs have a long purse.

"Who is this Mr. Leroy?" asked Mr. Eglistoun, with well-feigned indifference, as he drew on the prim-rose kids he had removed on his entrance.

"A carpenter who lives in the old wooden block in the next street; a first-rate mechanic he is, too."

"Ah! I may give him a job, in time."

"You're an artful dodger, but I can read you, like a book," said Mr. Burr, with a sly wink after his customer, as the latter closed the door behind him. "Nobody don't do nothin' that 'ta'n't for their interest to do; what did he crack her up so ferocious for? He's smote with her poorty face as sure's I'm a sinner. The girl's a plaguy fool, though, if she gives up a fellow like that Leroy, for this Eglistoun, grand as he is; he'd tire of her in a month, and abuse her like a brute. I'll keep an eye on 'em, and put a flea in the carpenter's ear if I see any 'casion for't."

The long expected birth-night came, at last. Ellen was alone in their plainly furnished but cheerful sitting-room, looking, for the twentieth time, at the charming effect of the dressing-robe which hung over the arm-chair; the last stitch had been placed in it about an hour previously.

A footfall on the stairs reached her listening ears, and in another moment she had opened the door to admit Mr. Leroy. If the humble family historian is as much in duty bound, as is the more dignified chronicler of national events, to present things ex-

actly as they occurred, then truth obliges us to confess that Leroy came home with a cloud on his brow—in fact, positive cross; more so than Ellen had ever seen him before. Consequently her warm feelings were chilled, and she came unusual near being stiff and awkward in presenting her gift.

"Ah, did you really make this for me, and earn the money t buy it with, too? It was very kind of you, I am sure, and I am a thousand times obliged to you."

He spoke in a kindly tone, but his features did not relax into a smile: he scarcely looked at her, or the garment she had fashioned with so much care—he did not even offer to try it on.

Her heart swelled: was this the only reward she was to reap for all her pains and labor?

He threw himself into the arm-chair and sat looking gloomily into the fire, without, in the least, heeding her presence.

"Are you tired, to-night?" she asked, after waiting, what seemed to her a long time, for him to break the silence.

"Worse than tired, I am worried and perplexed: my men have struck for higher wages, and it's not long since they struck for the ten-hour system. At this rate, I shall not make a cent out of what I expected would be a profitable job."

Her little resentment flew away, like mist on the wings of sunshine. It was enough that he was in trouble, her little stock of *consolements* was instantly at his service.

"Then we must live more economically," she said, with winning hopefulness, "and I can earn something with my needle: the mouse helped the lion, you remember."

The much coveted smile was not withheld this time.

"Don't you stir," she said, with unusual vivacity: you are tired, and I will bring the tea in to you."

Going into the kitchen, she quickly reappeared, bringing in a well filled tea-tray, which she placed on the little table, and drew it up beside him. After presenting him a snowy napkin, she buttered his toast, sweetened his tea, sliced his marmalade, and went through all the duties of a well-instructed waiter—with variations. Supper, seasoned with so many delicate attentions,

acted as an emollient on his chafed spirit; and as Ellen removed the half empty dishes, her heart beat blithe and lightsome, for he had declared, under the influence of a delicious saucer of blanc mange, perhaps, that she was a treasure, and would be a sunbeam in any man's home.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST LITERARY VENTURE.—A STINGING CRITIQUE.

"THIS is my birth-night, and I am too tired to handle a pen, or even read the paper I brought home with me, and so you must tell me a story, Nelly," said Mr. Leroy pleasantly, after an effort to shake off the weight of care and vexation that oppressed him.

"What sort of a story will you have?"

"O, any thing you have been reading lately," he said, settling himself back in his chair, as if sure of being gratified by whatever she chose to relate.

She bent her head on her hands, remaining a few minutes silent, then, without introduction or preamble, commenced a fairy tale, now sparkling with brilliant gleams of fancy, then haunted by dim, mysterious shapes of weird and dreamy beauty, and provoking a smile anon, by some absurdly grotesque hobgoblin presentment. Through the varied domain of "Good Queen Mab" she led her charmed listener, he willingly resigning himself to her agreeable guidance.

"Is that all?" he asked, after she had concluded, and there had been silence in the room for a full minute.

"Is't not enough?" she asked, smiling, while the color called into her cheeks by the excitement of the narrative grew fainter and the light of enthusiasm was fading from her eyes.

"I suppose I must be content, and not keep you talking the whole evening, for my amusement. But really, Nelly, there

must he somewhere in the universe, some thing brighter and better than this dull, plodding life the most of us lead. You have turned towards me the silver lining of the cloud, almost always hanging over the earth, until I have forgotten its darkness. Your story took me into a new world, where rampant workmen and everyday cares found no place: pray, where did you find it? not in the book-closet, surely, or I should have seen it there, myself."

She replied only by raising her finger and playfully tapping her own forehead.

"In memory? how came it there?"

"You do not understand; it was an airy nothing, to which I have striven to give a local habitation and a name, for your special behoof."

He looked much surprised.

"And so you really made it up yourself! of a truth, Nelly, you have a faculty which is not given to every one. Can you *write* a story as well as *tell* one?"

"I dare say I could, if it were worth my while."

"Very well; if you will write enough to fill a small book, I will have it printed. Who knows but my little housekeeper may make herself famous yet? At all events, if you can cheer a dull hour for others, as you have done the last one for me, you will not have labored in vain."

"If I were only sure others would listen to my words without wisdom, with the same good-natured indulgence you extend to them! But, Mr. Leroy, if I should make an attempt at book-making and fail of success—that is, win no readers for my little volume—would *you* think any the less of me on that account?"

"Of course not: what put such a foolish idea in your head?"

"It came of itself; I am glad it need not remain."

The succeeding morning, as soon as her household duties were hurried through with, she sat down to her writing-desk, and soon became oblivious of all external sights and sounds in the fascinating task of clothing with graceful, flowing word-draperies, the airy fancies that thronged her brain.

Day by day, the manuscript increased, and at last drew towards completion, was finished, and delivered to Mr. Leroy. It was accepted by the first publishing-house to whom it was offered, very nearly on their own terms. The profits arising from the first sales of the book were to defray expenses of stereotyping, after which, the writer was to receive ten per cent. on the price of every volume sold.

"I do not know as I have the best bargain I could," said Mr. Leroy, "but the fact is, I don't know any more about publishing books than I do about writing them; if it had only been any thing in the building line, I should have known what I wanted."

After various and unaccountable delays, whose causes Ellen failed to comprehend, she was once more busy with her pen, this time, in her first essay at the correction of proof-sheets, which proved to her as onerous a task, as her first attempt at housekeeping. She set about it in this wise:—Having not the remotest conception of the meaning intended to be conveyed by the unfamiliar symbols already placed, by the proof-reader, on the margins of the pages, Ellen proceeded to indicate the alterations she wished to have made, in a style of her own, and the unfortunate compositor was reduced to a state bordering on distraction, in his baffled pursuit of knowledge under difficulties. Well, the book—her own book, which had opened a new fountain of joy in her heart, fringed about with bright anticipations and hopes, too glowing, perhaps, to be realized—was brought to her, at last. How curiously she turned it about in her hand! How different seemed its aspeet from that of any volume she had ver held before!

It was enough, for the time, to know that it was actually rinted and bound: this amply satisfied her. But not many ays had elapsed, before the natural desire to know the fate, hus far, of her first literary venture, made itself felt.

"I met your publisher, as I was walking down the street," aid Mr. Leroy, one evening, on entering the house.

"I was thinking, to-day," said Ellen, "how very kind he was o assume the disagreeable responsibility of ushering before the

public—that is, if the public will receive it—the first work of a obscure and unknown writer." These were her words, b "Does my book sell?" was the question she *looked*, to whic mute inquiry he replied:

"Not very well: money is shocking tight, and, of course books don't sell any better than anything else; besides, there are a host of new works, by authors of established repute, with literary and editorial friends to speak a kind word for them, issuing from the press. Here is the evening paper; perhaps you may find your own advertised, with the rest."

With a blush at her own eagerness, she ran her eye down the column, headed "Book List," without, however, finding what she sought. In folding the sheet, her eye caught the words, *New Publications*. A minute more, and the paper fell to the floor: she leaned back in her chair, quite pale and agitated.

"What is it, Ellen?"

"See for yourself, please."

Picking up the paper she had dropped, and glancing over its columns, he said, smilingly: "So we are criticised, are we?" and proceeded to read aloud, as follows:

"FAIRY TALES AND OTHERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

"BY ONE OF THEM.

"Boston: Dudley and Appleton. This is a somewhat amusing book of trash."

He paused to look at her with a kind but searching glance.

"Better amusing than stupid, isn't it, Nelly?"

She nodded, without a word of reply: just then, she was so busy with her own thoughts, as to have scarcely understood his question.

He resumed his reading:

"The existence of fairies is an old, exploded notion, unworthy the intellectual advancement of the present enlightened age; and whoever attempts to revive these effete creations of a riotous imagination, must needs expect disappointment and failure as his

st reward. At the present stage of human progress, a work,) meet the approval of the reading public, must be something ıore than merely amusing, although it is well to be *that*, the ıore effectually to beguile the reader's attention to the more nstructive pages which a volume deserving of success will ıssuredly contain."

"It seems that the bitter pill of knowledge is to be gilded with a thin coating of amusement, and swallowed unawares, like a nauseous potion disguised with sweetmeats," interposed Ellen, in a tone more nearly *sharp* than any Mr. Leroy had ever before heard her adopt.

He looked up in surprise, and his gaze lingered on her face, for with the unwonted flash of her eyes and the rosy bloom on her cheeks, she was even radiantly beautiful, and man, more than woman, is susceptible to the charms of mere physical beauty. But even while his eyes rested on her admiringly, her color began to fade, and she added, with her usual gentleness of manner:

"Needing instruction so much myself, it would have been presumptuous folly in me to have attempted imparting it to others. It was the extent of my ambition to supply harmless amusement for a leisure hour, which might otherwise be devoted o that mischief which *some one*, not to be mentioned to ears olite, is said to find for idle hands to do."

Once more he read:

"The style, although, upon the whole, not ungenial, is disgured by inaccuracies that would disgrace a school-girl, and ıich the youngest writer ought to be ashamed of allowing to eep into his, or her, first exercise in literary composition."

"This is false and unjust," cried Mr. Leroy, indignantly.

"It may not be wholly undeserved," said Ellen. "The fact having no very high idea of my own composing powers, I ve less time than I ought to revising what I had written. ɔu see there was something more than a possibility that my practiced scribblings might find their way to the pastry-cooks

or trunk-makers, and it would make precious little difference to *them* whether my style was polished and correct, or whatever else it was. Please go on"

He read:

"A criticising public has manifested its usual impartial discrimination in rejecting what is valueless, by the very slight degree of patronage it has extended to the work now lying before us."

"This is the 'unkindest cut of all,' the 'last hair that broke the camel's back,'" said Ellen, with a smile that extended no farther than her lips, the rest of her face wearing anything but a mirthful expression.

"Try again," said Mr. Leroy, with a rather dubious expression of countenance; with greater care, you may succeed better, in a second attempt."

"And run the risk of going through *this* again? No, Mr. Leroy, it is too bitter."

He turned to his paper:

"In conclusion, we have only to add that we sincerely advise the fair authoress (the volume is evidently from the pen of a female author) to relinquish her pen for that more feminine implement, the needle, in the use of which, we may be permitted to express the charitable hope, that she will display a greater degree of aptitude than she has, thus far, exhibited in driving a tortured goose-quill."

"I do not see but that you are pretty fairly demolished by that last sentence, Nelly."

"And *I* see no reason for the critic's taking out his big rhetorical *club*, when a *straw* would have answered his purpose quite as well: it is surely as easy, and much more humane, to brush an inoffensive insect from one's path, than to crush it with one's whole weight. You was saying, the other day, that mercantile failure, if unaccompanied by fraud, was sure to meet with the sympathy of the Boston community; why, then, should

literary failure meet with such harsh reprobation? Is the writing an indifferent book so criminal a matter as to deprive its perpetrator of any claim to that courteous kindness that the people of this country, in every other instance, are proud of according to woman?"

"Never mind, Nelly; be thankful you hadn't to trust to your pen for your daily bread. You're no worse off than you was before. While I have a roof over my head, or a crust of bread to share with a friend, you shall never want for either."

"Thank you, brother Laurence; but you do not quite understand me. Although I should have been very, *very* glad to have earned the means of making you some return for all these years of kindness, yet the hardest part of my disappointment will be the giving up my genial, new-found employment. With my pen, I was no longer alone; fair young faces seemed dimly hovering about me, sometimes glancing over my shoulder approvingly at the written page. Alas! that my readers should have been but myths of my own creating! This seems very foolish in the telling, Laurence; but the thought of the sympathy I hoped, through my writings, to gain for myself, made me very happy in the days that are gone. Is it really true, do you think, that earthly hopes bloom but to fade, as moralists tell us? Well, I will think no more of it; let it pass. Henceforth I resign what had already become the most cherished aim of my life."

"Let me supply its place by another," he said, taking her unresisting hand in his own. "You have long been the light of my home—for years my main comfort and dependence has been upon yourself. So much do I owe you, that I would gladly sacrifice the whole future of my life to the promotion of your happiness." (He spoke rapidly, with the heat and energy of passion, not stopping to weigh his hastily chosen words.) "Be the sharer of all I have to call my own. Ellen, be my wife."

A soft light had risen to her eyes as he commenced speaking, but at the word "sacrifice," he had incontinently used, it had died out of them, and she said to herself, "I would accept a lifelong sacrifice from no man, least of all from one so good, so kind, so generous as he."

Withdrawing her hand from his clasp, she said, in tones t sounded very calm and cold from the effort she made to suppr all appearance of emotion,

"My brother, it must not be."

He stared blankly in her face, for a moment, as if scarce believing he had heard aright, then, rising, took his hat and le the room. She heard the outer door bang to after him, an buried her face in her hands, which were soon wet with her tears Thus in a measure relieved, she could look back more calmly o what had passed.

"If Mr. Leroy," she asked herself, "had looked upon the marriage he proposed in the light of a personal sacrifice, why had he betrayed so much agitation, when, for his sake, she had declined it?"

She knew him too well to suppose it came from mortified pride at a rejection he rejoiced in at heart. Was it possible it had been caused by pity for herself? Had the discovery of her own carefully guarded secret—the more than sisterly regard she bore him—prompted his sudden proposal? and was his subsequent emotion but the result of compassion for all the after sorrow her refusal of his offer might draw upon herself?

The burning blush of shame dyed her neck and face, as she confessed to herself the probability of this surmise. In another instant she had dismissed it, on reflecting that he had looked not only sorrowful but surprised, and, in a lesser degree, resentful.

She found herself in a labyrinth of doubts and perplexities. Better, she thought, seek a candid explanation with Mr. Leroy, on his return, and tell him why she could not be his. And thus reveal to him the state of her own affections, and actually appeal, by word of mouth, to his compassion for a renewal of his suit? "Absurd! I will owe nothing to his pity," she said, with womanly pride, and banished the hasty resolve.

"He did not say he loved me," she thought, with a sudden revulsion of feeling that made her sick at heart; "if he had only said *that*, how different things might have been; but he is too upright to express more than he actually feels. I have done

right in refusing him: it is in that thought that I must find my consolation."

Ellen had never dreamed of marriage, or ever hoped to win from *him* a more than brotherly regard (the contrast between her own deformity and his vigorous manhood effectually preventing this), why, then, this sudden weight of oppression that had fallen on her heart?

It was in vain that she strove to reason herself into a happier frame. Whichever way she looked, the future, once so bright, seemed lone and dark and dreary.

Their usual hour for retiring came, and Mr. Leroy had not returned. She usually waited up for him, but now she could not: there seemed a shade of impropriety, even, in doing so. Placing his night-lamp and slippers within reach, she went sadly away to her own sleeping-room, and, bolting herself securely in, abandoned herself to a solace she rarely indulged in—that of tears and sobs.

"If I only had some one to counsel me," she said, checking herself, after a time; "for I can never go to Mr. Leroy again for advice as I have done. O mamma, my darling mamma, if you could but have been spared to me!"

Throwing herself on her knees, she sobbed forth, "Oh, my Father, be Thou my refuge and my shield!" Words of earnest entreaty, of contrite confession, and, at last, of calm trust and holy submission flowed from her lips.

When she rose to her feet, there was on her face an expression of peace, not born of earth. That night she slept soundly and well.

Alas! weak, erring mortals that we are, how seldom is it that we attain this sublime exaltation of faith which lifts us above the cares and sorrows of life, into the glorious presence of One who sits serene, above the sunshine and the cloud. How soon the interests, griefs and trials, incident to man's fallen station, rise up about us, like a dense, spiritual miasma, shutting out the divine effulgence which would be as "a lamp to our path and a light to our feet;" and, Heaven help us! we once more grope and stumble forward along the darkened way.

When Mr. Leroy took his seat at the breakfast-table, n morning, Ellen felt, with pain, that there was between them shadow of restraint, which had never been there before. N that his tone was less kind than formerly, but he spoke only the most common-place topics, and studiously avoided her glan On going out, he merely bade her "Good morning," without o fering his hand, as he had been accustomed to do at departu These trifles it was that brought to her eyes the tears which sl resolutely repressed, saying to herself—

"It will all come right, in time, and we shall once more be t each other all that we have been in the past."

In the evening, Mr. Leroy sat down to the little table with a open book before him; but Ellen, who sat opposite him, was almost sure he was not reading, as his eyes did not move along the page, and, for a half hour, he never turned over a single leaf.

He was startled from his reverie, whatever might have been its subject, by a rap at the door, which he went himself to open.

"Ah, Mr. Eglistoun, I hope you are very well. Let me offer you a chair. Miss Verne—Mr. Eglistoun."

The latter bowed with gallantry, offering his soft, fair hand, in the palm of which Ellen coldly placed the tips of her fingers.

"By Jove, she has picked up the true *aristocratic touch*, somewhere, and it becomes her rarely," thought Mr. Eglistoun. Then aloud:

"I have called, Mr. Leroy, to say to you that the door you have been cutting from my mother's dressing-room she would prefer to have swing inward."

"Very well, it can be made to do so, with but little trouble."

Mr. Eglistoun bowed, somewhat haughtily. What had he to do with the "trouble" of a mere working man? Looking at Ellen, his manner instantly softened, and he remarked, in a conciliatory tone,

"I myself propose erecting, not immediately however, a large dwelling-house on "The Neck;" and when I receive the plan, which is at present in the possession of a distinguished architect, I would like to have you make an estimate of the cost of building it. The saving of expense, however, is less an object of con-

sideration with me, than correctness and elegance of finish, in all the details. The fine workmanship of the repairs you have been doing for my mother first suggested to me the idea of giving you my own house to build."

Mr. Leroy's interest and attention were fully aroused, not only because the proposed job would be likely to prove highly remunerative, but that its execution would bring into play that skill and taste which his ordinary, every-day employ had failed to call forth. Even Ellen looked more kindly upon their caller, when he condescended to discuss, with Mr. Leroy, the relative merits of painted and gilded brackets and mouldings, of papered and frescoed walls, and the best mode of arranging the water-pipes, wherewith the projected dwelling was to be heated.

When Mr. Eglistoun rose to go, Mr. Leroy politely lighted him down stairs.

"You have a charming houri to preside over your household *ménage*," remarked the former, carelessly, on reaching the hall.

"The house would seem very lonely without her," frankly returned Mr. Leroy, not ill pleased to listen to the praises of one whom he still regarded as incomparably the most agreeable young woman he had ever met, and whom he could not find it in his heart to blame, in that she had given him the regard of a sister instead of the impassioned love he would fain have inspired.

"Is she a relative of yours, may I ask?" carelessly interrogated Mr. Eglistoun.

"She is not," said Mr. Leroy, slightly reddening under the scrutinizing gaze of his companion.

"Excuse me, but her uncommon sweetness and purity of expression must awaken the interest of every one who approaches her. Has she no relatives, that she seems to be thus thrown so entirely upon *your* protection?"

"None in this country, and none in the world, indeed, to whom she could look for a maintenance."

Mr. Eglistoun, for a moment, nearly forgot his object, in a sudden feeling of surprise, that a mere artizan—one who literally fulfilled the primal curse pronounced upon all the descendants of Adam, by earning his daily bread by the sweat of his brow,—

should address him in a phraseology scarcely less choice than own.

"By Jove! you are a lucky fellow—not even a third cou to interfere with any sort of tuition you may choose to best upon your *protégée*. I dare say, the first moral principle y took care to inculcate was a well-grounded faith in your own i fallibility, eh? But, seriously, how did it happen that you su ceeded in acquiring such unlimited control over her actions? asked Mr. Eglistoun, recollecting himself.

"We were wrecked at sea; both her parents were drowned; but I succeeded in rescuing Ellen, then a mere child, from the waves," said Mr. Leroy, with cold reserve of manner, for he was not pleased at the turn the conversation was taking.

"Indeed! well, I have only to say that if you should happen to tire of the guardianship of your lovely ward, a word to that effect, and I will rid you of the charge; I can even make it worth your while to resign it to me at once. Her shoulders, to be sure, are a little awry, but her face is the face of a fairy, her eyes beautifully lustrous, and her mouth, with its full, none too full, firm lips, deliciously tempting in its dainty curve."

Mr. Leroy threw at his visitor a quick, indignant look, and if the word "villain" did not escape his lips, it was because it died a violent death on its way thither. He only said, very coldly—

"I'm obliged to you, sir, but it was of my own free will I took upon myself the charge of her support; it never has, and it never can be, regarded by me in the light of a burden: I have no desire to relinquish it."

"I presume not," said Mr. Eglistoun, changing his tone, as he began to comprehend the character of the man he had to deal with; "but it was of the young lady's good I chiefly thought. Her position here, alone with you, is, of course, in the eyes of the world, but an equivocal one, (the speaker noticed, with almost a feeling of triumph, the look of keen pain that passed over his hearer's face, at this assertion), while I have a mother and sister who will hardly refuse to receive her—she will have no poor relations to drag her down—with the style and accomplishments she will speedily acquire under more favorable auspices."

ıused for a reply, but Mr. Leroy gave none.

is taking time to deliberate," thought the former; "he : easily duped than I had hoped." He could hardly re- a smile, at the uninformed credulity which had so easily led ɔssessor to believe that *his* aristocratic sister would receive ımeless orphan girl, without pretensions of any kind, the pted sister of a laboring mechanic, on terms of perfect ıality. Determining to add a clincher, in the way of an argu- ɪnt, he resumed:

"Having ample means at my disposal, and taking into my ɪead the whim of educating a poor girl, and elevating her to my ɔwn social level, assuredly those calling themselves her friends, if they really are such, ought to rejoice at her good fortune, and throw no obstacles in the way of its acceptance. I now offer to take upon myself the entire expense of bestowing upon her an education, such as your means would never allow; (of course, all intercourse with yourself must cease, this would be indispensable to the retention of a footing in that higher grade of society, to which I propose introducing her), and if she should ever wish to marry, her dowry, by no means a contemptible one, shall be forthcoming."

"And all this for no return! I do not clearly see your motive, sir."

"I was not aware that I was accountable to any one, much less yourself—" Mr. Eglistoun haughtily began, but checking himself, added, with traces of a sneer still lingering about his mouth—

"I am influenced by the same regard for an unprotected orphan that animates yourself: our motives in this instance are, probably, not far dissimilar."

"Now I understand you, fully," said Mr. Leroy, raising his downcast eyes, from which the lightning glance of scorn was flashing; "and I utterly refuse, now and for the future, to yield up to you one single iota of the control which I exert, and, Heaven helping me, will continue to exert, over my ward, as you are pleased to term her. I would sooner see her in the grave, than at your mercy."

Richard was himself again.

"You will remember to rectify the mistake, made through the carelessness of one of your workmen, in the alterations at my mother's," said Mr. Eglistoun, with haughty emphasis.

Mr. Leroy replied by a proud bend of the head, and thus the two *gentlemen* (?) parted. I leave it to the decision of my readers *which* of them better deserved the appellation.

Mr. Leroy had heard his last of the splendid dwelling to be erected on "The Neck."

He looked much disturbed as, on going back to the sitting-room, he resumed his seat at the little table, and fell into a train of troubled thought. It had never before occurred to him that his having the entire charge of a young girl but ten years his junior, and permitting her to share what had been, before her coming, his solitary bachelor apartments, might expose her to the misconstruction of the carping and evil-disposed—good and charitable natures are not prone to suspicion. His bronzed cheek took a deeper hue, as he called to mind a few sentences dropped by Burr, the tailor, which he had failed to comprehend at the time they were spoken, but which he now felt had been intended to convey a degrading suspicion of Ellen, and a warning caution against Mr. Eglistoun.

"Ellen," he abruptly asked, "did you ever see Mr. Eglistoun before to-night?"

She started at the suddenness, as well as the peremptory tone, with which the question had been put, and colored deeply, as she replied—

"Yes, sir, several times."

"Several times!" (in an accent of pained surprise), "pray tell me where?"

"The first time, you remember, he was assisting Miss Avondale into a carriage."

"Ah, I recollect: but where next?"

"When I went to carry home some lace I had been working for Miss Avondale, he was there."

"But why did you work lace for Miss Avondale?"

"I wanted some money for a particular purpose, and so I thought I would work and earn it."

"Superfluous! when my purse always lies in the drawer, and I have told you, more than once, to deny yourself nothing you need, while there is a cent left in it."

"But, Mr. Leroy, it was not for myself I wanted the money: I wished to buy you a birth-day present, and of course I couldn't have taken your earnings for *that*."

"It was very generous of you, certainly, but I would rather go without a present for the rest of my life, than to have you going about to strange houses, where there is no knowing whom you may meet."

Ellen thought, with a rueful smile, that in the whole affair of the birth-day gift, she had received but meagre encouragement to repeat it.

"Not that there is the least impropriety in your going wherever you like, alone," added Mr. Leroy, thoughtfully, "only I should feel better satisfied if you went out but seldom, excepting when I am with you; that won't do, either, for I am busy all day, and you must walk often on the common for a breath of fresh air."

Never before had Ellen caused Mr. Leroy such a weight of anxiety as he now bore, on her account.

"You did not tell me," he continued, "how it was you happened to see Mr. Eglistoun, at the Avondale's."

"He was sitting in the drawing-room, with Miss Avondale, when I went in to give her the lace."

"Did he speak to you?"

"Not until Miss Laura went up stairs, for her porte-monnaie. I don't exactly recollect what he said, but I know I thought him exceedingly rude and familiar."

"Rude and familiar! was he? then I shall take occasion to knock him over, the first time he crosses my path, wherever it may be."

"Oh! don't think of such a thing," cried Ellen, almost frightened at the effect of her words. "He only stared at me through an opera-glass; that may be quite a compliment, you know, in

the society he goes in, only I was too ignorant to appreciate it, that's all. At any rate, he did nothing to call for interference on your part."

"And you have never seen him since?"

"But once," she said, reluctantly, and flushing at the remembrance.

"Where was that?"

"As I was coming out of the tailor's shop—Mr. Burr's."

"Mr. Burr's! for mercy's sake what carried you to such a place as that?"

"He cut that unfortunate dressing-robe of yours," returned Ellen, almost ready to cry with vexation.

"What did Mr. Eglistoun say to you, this time?"

"Nothing worth repeating; please to excuse me."

"Tell me what he said, that I may form my own judgment concerning it," said he, looking quite pale and determined.

"Mr. Leroy, you treat me like a child," cried Ellen, stung into something like resentment, by his pertinacity; "when I tell you that he scarcely spoke a dozen words to me, and they such arrant nonsense that I do not care to repeat them, is it kind of you to urge me farther?"

"I have no *right* to *compel* your confidence," he began frigidly, then changing his tone, added more kindly, "promise me that you will never step into the shop of that Burr, who is a vile-mouthed, low-lived fellow I do not wish you to have any acquaintance with."

"I never intended to enter his door again."

"And that if Mr. Eglistoun should call, in my absence, you will not admit him."

"I never will. But why should you suppose he would call to see you in the day time, when he knows you are all day absent?"

The frank truthfulness of manner with which she looked up to him for a reply, relieved him of half his perplexities. Without answering her question, he said, simply,

"I only wish my mother was still alive, and this would be a much more pleasant and suitable home for you."

"Or if my own dear mamma might but come back to me,"

murmured Ellen, with tears in her voice, as Mr. Leroy passed behind the screens, now forming his dressing-room, whence he soon reappeared with a clean neck-tie and carefully brushed hat; saying he should not be long absent, he left the house. She did not see him again that night.

CHAPTER VII.

LEFT ALONE.—THE HONEYMOON (?)

A MONTH went by without any change worthy of record.

It was evening. Ellen sat alone in the snug sitting-room as often aforetime. A familiar step on the stair, and Mr. Leroy, throwing open the door, comes up to the table where she is sitting.

"I am going to be married, Ellen."

How like the knell of hope and happiness did those startling words fall on ears totally unprepared for them! Her work fell from her trembling fingers. She strove, with the desperate effort inspired by womanly pride and self-respect, to calm herself, so as to be able to speak without betraying the agitation she felt.

"Haven't you a word of congratulation to offer me?" he began in a tone of irritation, (he had been strangely restless and irritable of late, and now seemed like one who having decided on a course whose wisdom he doubted, had become highly sensitive to even the appearance of disapproval, in others,) when, Heaven knows, it was the idea of giving you a suitable home that first suggested—" he paused abruptly, bit his lip as if vexed at having said so much, and turning away, leaned against the mantel.

She was glad his back was towards her, and she had thus an opportunity to rally the forces which, in the panic of sudden surprise, had deserted her. Forcing back her tears, choking down the rising sobs, and bracing her quivering nerves, she said, in a voice tolerably steady—

"You have my best wishes, Laurence, my brother; may you be happy."

He gave her a simple word of thanks, without changing his attitude.

Calling to her aid that maidenly delicacy and womanly pride, which alike forbade the betrayal of her long-hoarded secret, she regained a degree of outward composure, that warranted her making the effort to ask who was to be the happy woman.

"You might have put your question in a different form," he said; "but I will not affect to misunderstand you. It is Miss More—Elvira."

Ellen allowed no token of the surprise she felt to make itself visible on her countenance. She repressed the thoughts that strove to crowd in upon her mind, and asked if the time for the marriage was yet appointed.

It was, about a month hence; as then Mr. Leroy would be less busy than later in the season, and could, therefore, better afford to lose the time, for a wedding trip to Washington, which, he affirmed, Elvira had set her heart upon.

He spoke without the least embarrassment, not even reddening as he pronounced the name of his betrothed, so that Ellen felt almost at ease, as he pursued the topic, so abruptly broached, and came, at last, to listen with apparent calmness while he expatiated on sundry plans for the future, in all of which her own happiness seemed to be a primary object, rather than a consideration secondary to another's welfare. How she congratulated herself that her secret was still her own; feeling sure, as she did now, that he had never loved her, otherwise he would not so soon have transferred his affections to one so exactly her opposite. She roused herself from this engrossing subject of contemplation, to listen to what he was saying.

"Elvira expresses the warmest interest in your behalf. She has felt much for your loneliness. I hope you will be very good friends, and love each other like sisters."

"Thank you; if she only makes my brother Laurence happy, I cannot do too much for her."

"Brother Laurence" did not seem quite satisfied with this

somewhat equivocal response; but Ellen would not affect to reciprocate a hope she had no expectation of seeing realized.

It was not until she retired to her room, for the night, that she could give herself fully up to the sway of the emotions called up by intelligence for which she was so wholly unprepared. She felt that she could have borne it better, if his choice had been different. She assured herself that it was neither envy, or jealousy of a fortunate rival, that made her pronounce Elvira More selfish, shallow, vain and frivolous. She feared that Mr. Leroy would find out, when too late, that he had made a fatal mistake, in a matter involving the happiness of a lifetime. She wished that some one would whisper him a word of warning; not for worlds would *she* have ventured such an attempt.

It must be, she at last concluded, that man is much more under the influence of mere physical beauty than woman, for she felt sure, that the rarest personal charms—the most perfect outward type of manly excellence—could not have blinded her own eyes to such glaring faults of character as Elvira possessed.

Ellen thought herself quite calm and dispassionate, as she mentally reviewed the whole subject, and wondered why it was that she shivered and trembled in every limb. Before closing her eyes in slumber, she had nearly reconciled herself to the proposed change in their little household, and yet her pillow was unconsciously drenched with tears.

Elvira More is in a perfect fever of preparation for their "bridal tour," as she delights to designate the projected trip to Washington. With an affectation of profound secrecy, she displays, as an especial favor, to each of her friends, the white silk dress, lace veil, and numerous be-edged and be-frilled garments, to which custom forbids our more particularly alluding.

With an icy chill at her heart, did Ellen listen to the irrevocable vows which death alone could annul. A sort of despairing hopelessness came over her. What had she in life to live for now? Who needed her? *No one.* Orphanhood! isolation! loneliness!—she had never felt them as now.

From the church, where the ceremony uniting them for life had been performed, the newly wedded pair entered the carriage

which was to convey them, after a short call at the bride's father's, to the depot, where their traveling trunks awaited them. Ellen had been invited to accompany them to Washington, but had steadily declined, as, also, Mr. More's entreaty that she would take Elvira's place in his family during his daughter's absence. Carefully, Ellen picked her way along the muddy streets to the home, which never had seemed so little like home before.

When their usual hour for dinner arrived, a feeling of dreary forlornness crept over her, as she more than once caught herself listening for the first sound of *his* footsteps on the stairs. When the long evening hours came on, she was even worse off than in the day-time. To be sure, she had often been alone of an evening before; but then she had been constantly looking forward to Mr. Leroy's return, and hearkening for his quick, familiar tread in the hall below. The house had never before seemed so still and deserted. The occasional sound of laughter from the lodgers in the story below, while it added to her feeling of personal safety, did nothing toward lightening the burden on her spirits. Dreariest anticipations of the future crowded in upon her. Hereafter, another would be listening, with a love whose expression need not be checked, for those returning footsteps *she* must learn to hear with indifference. Perhaps her presence might even act as an unpleasant restraint upon the open expression of that entire sympathy which, she felt sure, ought to exist between those to be sundered only by death. If she should perceive any symptoms of such a state of affairs, ought she not to leave the roof, beneath which she had so long found a kindly shelter, and seek in some other way to earn her own maintenance?

She began to cast about, in her own mind, for the best mode of accomplishing this desirable end.

If she had only succeeded with her pen!—there was no use in thinking of *that*. As to school-teaching, she was too ignorant of the daily routine its practice involved, and her own education was too desultory to make her very sanguine on that score. She was an expert needlewoman, but bending over her work from

morning to night would make the injured spine intolerably painful. Her needle she would have used as Sir Walter Scott proposed to use literature, as a staff, but by no means as a crutch on which to lean for her entire support.

As she thus looked forth into the wide, untried world, of which she knew so little, she was vividly reminded of that never-to-be-forgotten day, when her fear-strained eye had rested in anxious dread, first, on the wide waste of waters, and then upon the frail raft and weak, quivering form of him whose every breath might be the last. Under Providence, he had saved her then: she was still too weak to trust herself alone to life's billows, and must yet look to him at least for guidance.

When a few days had gone by, Ellen no longer cried out, even in spirit,—"Oh! how desolate, with no one to care for me, or by me to be cared for!" Gradually, better thoughts had dawned on her mind. She was beginning to look upward to the Friend who can be "touched with a feeling of our infirmities"—to the "Man of Sorrows" who once wept and prayed as, from the least unto the greatest, his followers must do. Deprived, for a season, of the earthly reed on which she had so long leaned, Ellen fled for refuge to Him who knoweth "neither variableness nor shadow of turning." Little by little, she was learning the lesson of life's stern discipline—to suffer and be strong.

She no longer said to herself—How dreary the future that opens before me! but, with a chastened spirit, resolved, as far as lay in her power, to know and to do the will of Him who allots to each of us our daily task.

She must, and would, learn to regard Mr. Leroy as a dear brother; and, if remaining under the same roof, there were a thousand ways in which she could be of service to him. More difficult would it be to receive the fair bride as a sister; but this must be done, as household jars would, she knew, be, of all things, the most distasteful to Mr. Leroy. Still further, she would do all she could, so she promised herself, to promote the affectionate union of the new-married pair, and exercise strong

guard over herself, that through no fault of her own should the seeds of dissension be sown between them.

The day of their expected return has come at last. All day long has Ellen been busy in bringing to perfection every possible arrangement for the comfort of the absent. Very pleasant she finds it to have some employment whose end does not centre wholly in self. Towards evening, a chill easterly storm sets in, and the dancing flames of the Lehigh coal in the grate, will give the travelers a cheery welcome. The arm-chair and slippers await their owner, as of old. A cab stops in the street. She hears a cabman setting a trunk into the hall: they have come. She flies into the kitchen, to be sure that the kettle is boiling, in readiness for tea. As she returns, Elvira is entering the sitting-room, while Mr. Leroy is bringing the trunks up from the hall.

"How d'ye do, Ellen?" And, much to her surprise, Elvira kissed her in cordial, sisterly fashion; whispering, with a backward glance at her husband, "You must put up with it, for 'tis a pet whim of his that we should be great cronies."

Ellen had no time to reply, for, in another instant, Mr. Leroy was holding both her hands in his own, and smiling down upon her.

"I am right glad to see you, Nelly. We spoke of you very often while away; and were so much afraid you would not be comfortable here, all alone, when Jane wrote us word you had declined their invitation. Have you missed me much?"

Ellen gave a quick glance, almost of alarm, at Elvira, who was quite absorbed in admiring contemplation of a white silk bonnet that she had just taken from a bandbox. Shaking out the blonde-trimmed curtain, which was slightly damp, she kicked her husband's slippers aside, and, tossing his dressing-gown on to the couch, took possession of the arm-chair, and held her bonnet toward the fire.

All this Ellen took in at a glance before bowing in reply to his question; his look and tone, so full of kindly interest, coming, as they did, after the days of utter forlornness she had been

spending, had filled her heart too full for utterance. For a moment, Mr. Leroy gazed earnestly at the moist eyelashes and the faint bloom on her previously colorless cheek, then dropped her hands and walked to another part of the room.

"Dear me, I'm tired to death; do, somebody, put this bonnet away," cried Elvira, from the chimney corner.

Ellen ran to do her bidding.

"O, don't lay it on the front or you'll crumple the bordering, or on the crown to crush the folds: then, there are the flowers on the sides, don't you see? the top is the only place where you can lay it. Now, if I could only get my boots off, and my slippers out of the valise, I should be quite comfortable."

Ellen good-naturedly volunteered her services. As Mr. Leroy turned round from the window, out of which he had *not* been looking, and caught sight of the slight, fragile form kneeling at the feet of his wife, a troubled look crossed his face, and he stepped forward, as if to remonstrate, then checked himself, without a word. The last few days had taught him the extreme unpleasantness of domestic altercation.

"Gracious, what an appetite it gives one to ride all day," said Elvira; "I hope you have got something decent for tea, Ellen."

"Come and see," said the latter, smilingly, as she led the way into the next room. "You will pour the tea, of course."

"Not I; it is too much trouble," replied Elvira. "She is more accustomed to it, and it will be easier for her than for me," she added, in response to an inquiring glance from her husband.

With some little embarrassment of manner, Ellen seated herself at the tea-tray, opposite Mr. Leroy.

"And, so you eat in the kitchen; horrid ungenteel!" said Elvira, looking about her with a critical eye. "What an old-fashioned room! with its high mantel-piece, little window panes and brass door-knobs. It don't look much like the splendid eating halls of the public-houses we have been stopping at."

"I'm glad we're away from them," said Mr. Leroy. "I've had enough of *either swallowing* my food whole, or being left

alone, at table, with a parcel of grinning waiters at my back. I am sure this room has a cosy, home-look (glancing approvingly at the bright copper tea-kettle, and the polished tin baker which threw off the rays of fire-light like a metallic mirror,) that I wouldn't exchange for the showy air of the best dining saloon in the country."

"I am glad you like it so well," said his wife, dryly; "but a room must be something more than *cosy* to suit my taste. However, I suppose I can manage to put up with it, for the short time we shall stay here. You know, my dear, you promised to move if I was not contented here."

"But I hoped you would be contented here, my—" the term of endearment stuck in his throat, and he reddened with annoyance.

"But I am *not* at all satisfied with the place," persisted Mrs. Leroy, with spirit. "We never shall have any genteel acquaintances, as long as we live in this street, with a brewery at one end of it, and an old clothes shop at the other."

"It is the street where I first had the pleasure of making your acquaintance," said Mr. Leroy, with a desperate attempt at gallantry.

"I wouldn't have lived here, a day, if I could have helped it," retorted his wife, rather sharply; "but father is such a slow-moulded sort of a person, that it would take a life-time to get him started on any new project. It wasn't *my* fault that you found me in such a mean neighborhood, by any means. But now that we are starting in life, married life, I mean," (and she smirked,) "it is very important that we should make the right sort of acquaintances; and, you see, if we should live here a year or two, we should, most likely, receive calls from lots of the common sort of people about here, and then, when we come to move to a genteel neighborhood, we shall have to cut them all, and *that* makes *so* many enemies; besides, it is a great bore to have to look the other way, every time you meet a familiar face."

"I should think so, indeed," said Mr. Leroy, with an emphasis quite lost upon Elvira; "but why subject yourself to any

such annoyance? Here in the city, there is no necessity for your making the acquaintance of disagreeable people, if they do happen to live next door to you."

"Dear me, Mr. Leroy, you don't seem to have any idea of good society. You don't suppose people living on handsome streets, in elegant houses, would come and visit in Wry Lane, even if an angel of light lived here! if you do, you, you are very much mistaken, I can tell you that."

"I have known highly inelegant people to live in elegant houses," he rejoined, "and it makes very little difference to me where, or how, my friends live, so long as their society gives me pleasure."

"I have made up *my* mind that I do not wish to live here, and I think it is very unkind of you to try and keep me in a place where I shall never be happy," said Mrs. Leroy, squeezing a diminutive tear from the corner of her eye.

"I did not think you disliked here so much, or I should not have urged your remaining," said Mr. Leroy, in a quick, nervous way; for he had learned to dread his wife's peremptory mode of speaking, and, still more, the tears which, thus early in their wedded life, she did not scruple to bring into service.

"Thank you, dear," she said in a mollified tone, for she was much pleased at this implied concession to her wishes. "To-morrow I will look up a boarding-place, it is so much better for a small family to board, and it will be so much pleasanter for me to be rid of the cares of housekeeping."

"Very well, if you prefer it," he said, in a hesitating, half-reluctant way; adding, as if heartily tired of the subject, "Are not these tarts delicious?"

"Very nice indeed. The cream-cakes, too, are almost as good as Vincent's. I declare, it seems as though Ellen was cut out for a pastry-cook, she takes to it so naturally."

Mr. Leroy threw a hasty glance at the object of this somewhat equivocal compliment, and received from her a look of serene composure.

Next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, Elvira left the house. When her husband came home to dinner, she had not

returned, as he ascertained on questioning Ellen as to his wife's whereabouts.

"You look tired and pale, Ellen," he said, kindly; "aren't you well to-day?"

"Only a headache," she said.

"Ellen, where are you?" cried Elvira, from the sitting-room, which she had just entered.

"Coming, this instant," was the prompt reply.

"Dear me, I'm half-starved, and tired to death traipsing all over the city, in this horrid walking. Do, Ellen, put away my bonnet and shawl, and hold my gloves to the fire a minute, they're sweated through; and brush my hair, the wind has blown it all into my eyes."

"Aren't you going to speak to me?" asked Mr. Leroy, who had followed Ellen in from the kitchen.

"Yes, by-and-by; I'm all out of breath now." And she threw herself back in the arm-chair, without even looking at him. Had she done so, she must have perceived, on his face, the same expression of pained surprise Ellen had detected thereon, at the tea-table, on the previous evening.

The mask of winning gentleness she had thought proper to assume, before marriage, for Mr. Leroy's special edification, had been so unscrupulously cast aside, the moment her captive was firmly secured in bonds matrimonial, that he was well nigh confounded by the suddenness of the transformation.

"I hope you are nearly ready for dinner, Elvira, as I can be absent from my work but an hour," he said rather gloomily.

She did not hasten her preparations in the least; not that she wished to provoke her husband's impatient ire, but that her own comfort was her first object in life, and she had never dreamed of incommoding herself for another's good. When fully ready, and not before, she leisurely seated herself at the dinner-table.

"Anybody would think, Mr. Leroy, that you were eating on a wager. I have not finished my chop yet, and here are you, waiting for a dessert—*you* that made such a grumbling at having to swallow your food whole, at the public-houses."

He might have retorted that she had kept him so long waiting for dinner, that he had no choice but to eat hurriedly, or not at all, but restrained himself, and said simply, that it was nearly time for him to leave.

"Then I might as well tell you, at once, Laurence, (where is the use of troubling myself with the *Mister* every time I speak?) that I have found a boarding-place which suits me exactly. It is at a large, stone-fronted house, in a very desirable street; and we can have three rooms, besides a privilege to sit in the 'Ladies' drawing rooms,' for only fifteen dollars a week. Cheap as dirt! the landlord told me so."

Mr. Leroy lay down his fork, and looked at his wife in utter astonishment. "Why, Elvira, that is nearly double what our household expenses amount to here, and we have always had everything we needed for comfort, haven't we, Ellen?"

If Mr. Leroy had declared peremptorily that he would not listen to his wife's proposal, extravagant as it was, compared with his means, she would probably, after a transient fit of the sulks, have acquiesced in his decision; but woe to the man strongly valuing domestic peace, who begins to "reason the case" with a woman of her temperament.

But we are neglecting Ellen's reply.

"We have been more than comfortable," she said, without heeding an imperative gesture from Elvira; "I have wanted for nothing."

"Fiddlesticks! the comforts of life! any nobody can have *them*. But, O Laurence, Laramont's is such a delightful place. And our sitting-room—I mean the one I looked at, and have set my heart upon having—is a perfect jewel. Mr. Laramont told me he had let the suit, before this, for thirty dollars a week—just twice as much as we are to pay.

"Why, it is fourteen feet high, with gilt and velvet paper-hangings and a splendid chandelier. The way I managed to get it so cheap, was, by promising to furnish and take the whole care of it myself."

"And so we should have to buy new furniture, for ours would not match with gilding and what-not. I tell you, Elvira, you

are trying to lead me into a style of living which I cannot afford."

"Do not try to make believe stingy, for I know it isn't in you," said the diplomatic spouse, with her most fascinating smile; "besides, I shall not ask a cent of you toward furnishing the rooms, as father has given me three hundred dollars for that very purpose. So, you see, all the trouble you will have about the matter, will be to move into the new rooms, when they are all ready for you. Then we can have an auction, and sell off all this old furniture: *that* will bring you in something."

He glanced regretfully, fondly even, at articles so long in daily use, that they had acquired the kindly, familiar aspect of well-tried friends. Sooth to say, he had well nigh shamed his manhood by moistened eyes, as he associated, in his mind, all these humble surroundings, with the revered form of a mother whose memory he cherished with the tenderest regard.

For a few moments, Elvira's voice sounded indistinctly in his ears. He roused himself from this momentary fit of abstraction, to find her saying:

"It is so very kind of you, not to oppose what I had so set my heart upon, that I can't thank you enough, my dear."

Ellen had quietly stolen out of the room. Elvira, throwing her arms about her husband's neck, in an excess of gratitude, pronounced him the dearest fellow in the world. "The dearest fellow in the world" seemed to have but little relish for either caress or compliment.

"If you wished to show me real kindness," he said, "you would make my interests your own."

"And so I will," she cried, with vivacity, presenting her cheek to lips that touched it but coldly. "I will be *so* economical; only let us live a little like other people, and I will find a thousand ways in which to make little savings."

"I am half an hour late," interposed Mr. Leroy, abruptly; "I shall have to run all the way down town." He hurriedly left the house; the young wife triumphing in the victory she had obtained over his better judgment.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIVING IN STYLE.

A WEEK, during most of which time Elvira was absent from home, passed before she invited her husband and Ellen to go with her and look at the rooms they were soon to occupy at Laramont's.

With an air of thorough *at-home-ativeness*, Elvira brushed past the porter in the hall, and preceded her companions up the broad carpeted stair-case. Down a long corridor they followed her, until, unlocking and throwing open a door, she turned, with a self-gratulatory air, to note the effect, upon her companions, of the elegant display within.

Her husband was dumb with amazement.

"Only look," she said, with a beaming smile, "at this carpet. Isn't it beautiful? real velvet pile. I got it for three dollars a yard, because there happened to be fifty yards in the piece; just what I wanted. I saved three dollars by making it and putting it down myself. Mortal hard sewing, but I was determined to economize. I bought the carpet because it was such a beauty, and because a good article is so much the cheapest, in the long run."

"Then you paid a hundred and fifty dollars, half of the sum you had to spend, for this one carpet," said Mr. Leroy.

"Exactly; how quick you are at reckoning," said his wife, intent on admiring her purchase. "Aren't these wrought-lace curtains beautiful, for cheap ones?—only four dollars a pair! The violet satin canopies are like those in Miss Bennett's rooms, right opposite ours. I mean to get acquainted with her, she is so rich and fashionable. Here are the arm-chairs, covered with violet satin; did you ever see anything prettier? We can crack them up, amongst ourselves, you know: it wouldn't answer before callers; they would be apt to think we hadn't been used to such things."

"And think rightly enough, too," said Mr. Leroy in an access of disgust.

"This purple velvet lounge," continued Elvira, without heeding the interruption, "I looked at, two or three days, before I made up my mind to buy it, at sixty dollars. When I had paid for that, the looking-glass, and the cane-seated reception chairs, my purse looked rather lean, I can tell you."

"And this room, think you, is furnished suitably for the every day use of a carpenter and his wife? Excepting in these cane-seated chairs, I see no place where I should dare to sit down with my working clothes on. For my part, I wouldn't give a straw for furniture that is too fine for use."

"O, this room is to be kept nice for callers, Laurence. I shall bring down your old arm-chair and sofa, from the other house, and cover them with chintz; they will look good enough for our sleeping-room, where we shall mostly sit."

"Then all this expenditure is for others' comfort, instead of our own; as though what is good enough for us, isn't good enough for those of our acquaintances who care enough for us to give us a call. Believe me, Elvira, when people stoop to all sorts of paltry makeshifts, for the sake of aping the style of their richer neighbors, they deserve to lose their own self-respect, and gain the contempt of the community; and, in my opinion, you couldn't have parted with your money more foolishly."

"There it is, again, Mr. Leroy; you do nothing but find fault with me; I can do nothing to please you. I am sure it seems very hard and very unjust that I can't have my say in spending what is my own; not a thing here came out of your means."

The cambric handkerchief found its way to her eyes, and Mr. Leroy became unpleasantly aware that she was dragging him near those formidable rapids—the pathetic—in which his cause was sure to founder.

Ellen, with averted face, affected to be looking into the street, but her heart was heavy within her. Was it for this she had refused the man of her choice! Had her self-sacrifice been, for him, in vain! How lightly Elvira seemed to regard the affection *she* would have given so much to have been able to win!

How differently would she herself have striven to have made his fireside the dearest spot on earth, to him! With a blush, a feeling almost of guilt, she drove from her mind thoughts no longer safe or right. At the same time, the conviction forced itself upon her that Elvira's beauty, without corresponding charms of mind, would fail to retain the heart it had won. If, so soon, dissension was springing up, between the wedded pair, Heaven help them all! for the future. She had prepared herself to witness their mutual tenderness, so that, with a strong will, she had been able to choke down the stifling sob with which she had first seen Elvira lean over her husband's chair, and, with her arm on his shoulder, whisper to him some secret, kept for his ear alone; their mutual alienation she had never anticipated.

"Come, Ellen, we are going to look at the other rooms," said Mr. Leroy.

Elvira wiped her eyes, and with no great show of alacrity, threw open an inner door, displaying a small room, quite bare of furniture, with a single window, high up in the wall, looking out upon the corridor.

"You see," she began hurriedly, as if to forestal any remarks her husband might be disposed to make, "it doesn't make so much difference how these rooms are furnished, as none of our visitors will ever be invited into them; and so I have concluded to take the beds and things out of the other house; they will answer well enough for here."

"And this is where we are to sit; a pleasant prospect, truly!" said Mr. Leroy. Why, when the bed is up, there will be little more than room enough to squeeze between that and the wall."

Elvira looked about her. "I had really forgotten the room was so small," she said, with amiable frankness; "but never mind, I will cover the old sofa and arm-chair so handsomely that they will look well enough for the sitting-room, and we will use that every day, as you seem to think we had better."

Mr. Leroy was less grateful for this concession to his prejudices than his wife could have desired.

"What have we here?" he asked, throwing open a second door.

"This is our dressing-room."

"Really, there *is* much in a name: I should have called it a clothes-press. But here is a capital closet beyond."

"It is your sleeping-room, Ellen," said Elvira, not caring to hear her husband's last remark. "How do you like it?"

"It is very snug and cosy, and the paper-hangings are perfectly lovely," she replied, glad to find anything to approve. Hitherto, she had adroitly contrived to avoid taking any part in a conversation which had jarred painfully on nerves over sensitive, perhaps, to discordant tones; as she dreaded, above all things, being drawn into the disagreeable position of umpire between husband and wife.

"I wish every one was as good-natured and easily suited as you are, Ellen," said Mrs. Leroy, with a glance at her husband much more expressive than amiable.

All the way back through the sitting-room Elvira pouted; but on reaching the corridor, thought proper to don her most gracious and engaging airs, for the benefit of any stray gentleman-boarder they might chance to meet.

By the following evening, our trio were comfortably domiciled in their new apartments. The earliest hour for breakfast the next morning was half-past six, and accordingly, at that time, Mr. Leroy was ready to descend. Elvira preferred waiting till the more fashionable hour of eight, and insisted on Ellen's remaining also, to prevent the awkwardness of going down to table for the first time alone. Although by no means pleased with this arrangement, Mr. Leroy acquiesced, rather than make a fuss about a trifling matter.

At eight, the gong, that most startling of all modes of summons to the uninitiated, sent forth its continuous clang, in hall and corridor, throughout the large building. Elvira and Ellen, in going down stairs, were overtaken by a group of laughing gentlemen, and, hastening their steps, came up with several others, who stared at them, more in surprise than rudeness, over their shoulders. Abashed and confused, Ellen turned her head,

only to be met by a pair of saucy eyes behind a lorgnette. On reaching the door of the long breakfast-hall, the gentlemen passed them and seated themselves at the table. Ellen felt ready to sink to the floor on perceiving that, of all the ladies present, they were the only ones unprovided with an escort. A waiter hastened to their relief, and conducted them nearly the whole length of the hall before coming to the seats that had been reserved for them.

Many eyes were attracted toward Ellen by her extreme timidity of manner, her glowing, pink-hued blushes (her complexion was too delicately fair to crimson), her loveliness of feature, as contrasted with that deformity of figure half veiled by the yellow curls with shades of brown, which fell over her shoulders. She scarcely raised her eyes while at table, and then only to make some necessary request of the waiter nearest her.

Elvira, on the contrary, was immensely flattered by the sensation she supposed herself to have produced: her only source of chagrin arising from the fact of her being the only lady present unattended by one of the other sex.

"That is Miss Bennett, Ellen," she said, pointing to a lady who was leaving the hall just in advance of themselves.

While ascending the stairs, the lacing of Miss Bennett's slipper became unfastened and trailed behind her. Elvira immediately offered her services in securing the loose lacing, and was rewarded by the thanks of the young lady, who not only introduced herself to the overjoyed Elvira, but offered, as she was a stranger in the house, to present her to any of the boarders whose acquaintance she might be desirous of making. Before Elvira left Miss Bennett at the door of her room, she had received the invitation for which she had been angling, viz., to accompany her new friend and her brother to their meals when she was otherwise unattended. This was better than she had even dared to hope. In the best of spirits, she sought Ellen, ready to laud to the skies Miss Bennett's kindness, beauty and—exquisite morning-dress.

When Mr. Leroy came home—if home it could be called—to his one o'clock dinner, that elegantly dressed *lady* (?) who called

him "dear husband," every time she had a favor to ask, declared that she had lunched but an hour before in company with Miss Bennett, and coldly expressed her determination of dining herself at the more fashionable hour of four.

"Am I to live in the same house with you, and yet take all my meals apart from you?" he asked, in a tone of incredulity not unmingled with displeasure.

"It is no worse to eat your dinner than your breakfast without me," said Elvira, evading a direct reply to his question. "You see, Laurence, all the people one cares to know, are to be met with at the later tables."

"Complimentary, very," said Mr. Leroy, dryly.

"O, I didn't mean *you*," said his wife, innocently; "but if you really dislike going down alone, why not take Ellen with you? Miss Bennett has promised to take care of me, so I am well provided for."

"Perhaps Ellen, too, would prefer dining at the table where she will meet 'all the people one cares to know,'" said Mr. Leroy, with a spice of bitterness, not unmingled with contempt, in his tone.

"It doesn't make the least difference to her," said Elvira, confidently; "for Ellen doesn't care a straw about getting into good society."

Ellen was glad, at all events, that this reply spared her the embarrassment of deciding the matter.

In awkward silence, she descended with Mr. Leroy to the dining-room, where they found seats, at a small side-table, which, with the exception of a deaf elderly gentleman, and a venerable matron with impaired eyesight, they had all to themselves. Gradually, the icy bar of reserve that had risen up, of late, between Mr. Leroy and Ellen, melted away; and they found themselves talking to each other, if not with unlimited confidence, at least with a portion of their former cordial frankness.

She met with expressions of warm sisterly interest the communications he chose to make, relating to his daily employment (he never once spoke of his wife), which she so far understood,

as to make the most agreeable of listeners—that is, well enough to appreciate his good business moves, but not so well as to be able to tell him wherein they might have been better. So quickly did time pass, that he could hardly believe the clock, which told him he had been three-quarters of an hour at table.

"Tell Elvira I cannot stop to see her now, but I will be home early, this evening," he said, hurrying away.

With utter indifference Mrs. Leroy received his message. She had much more important subjects of thought than an hour, more or less, of her husband's society.

"Now, Ellen," she cried, "do, for mercy's sake, help me to dress; as I am going down with Mr. and Miss Bennett, it won't do to disgrace them by looking like a dowdy. Shall I wear this pale, pearl silk, being a bride? or my blue flounced dress, which is ten times more becoming? But then, I haven't any blue sash to match, and so I couldn't display my handsome gold buckle; my turquoise ear-rings and bracelets, though, will look best with the blue dress. Dear me, I wish I had somebody capable of advising me. I wonder what Miss Bennett will wear; what wouldn't I give to know?"

Thus, in grievous doubt and perplexity, began the all-important ceremony of dressing. For a full hour did Ellen assist at the wearying task of trying on dresses, draperies, frills and laces, and removing the same, to make place for others. Not until Miss Bennett tapped at the door, were the finishing touches given to this elaborate toilette.

Elvira accompanied her new friends to the dining-hall, making a study, all the way down stairs, of a new style of trimming on Miss Bennett's robe of moire antique.

Mr. Bennett wore a sentimental, pensive expression of countenance, with an attitute to match, which he generally assumed with his dress-coat, as an outward symbol of that inward mildew of neglect under which his young affections were supposed to be suffering. He is a spare young man, with weak eyes, and a moustache so distressingly feeble, that it droops incontinently into his soup-plate, into his egg-glass, into his oyster-sauce, and has therefrom to be constantly poked aside.

This doleful lugubriousness of expression was all brought about by the heartless conduct of a certain fair damsel, who steadfastly persisted in ignoring his own unapproachable perfections of mind and person. She had concluded her infatuation by throwing herself away on a miserable young doctor, as poor as a church-mouse; declaring, with a want of worldly wisdom, rare, indeed, in good society, that his honorable manliness of character atoned for all other deficiencies; and that she would rather toil in the humblest walks of life, with, and for, such a husband, than sit, a queen, with one less nobly gifted.

In consequence of the inauspicious termination of his suit, at court of Cupid, Mr. Bennett chose to view himself in the light of an injured man, even going the length of repeating, with a tragic air:

> "Woman's vows are writ in water;
> Woman's faith is traced in sand."

Though, as the lady of his pursuit had always vowed she *wouldn't* have him, it is somewhat difficult to discover the oppositeness of the quotation.

Our blighted lover professed to see little in life worth living for, and yet, was by no means insensible to the *modus operandi* of the process, while called upon to endure the same. He rather prided himself on his epicureanism, in the matter of eating and drinking. Nothing on the table ever exactly suited his fastidious palate; and he seemed to make a point of calling for the very thing that was neither present nor easily to be procured. Hither and thither ran the waiters, at his command, while the numerous occupants of the hall were left with scarcely the necessary attendance. And yet, with all his overbearing authoritativeness, no man at table was worse served than himself. An over-done steak, or an under-done tart was sure, by some unerring fatality, to find its way to his plate. He revenged himself by turning up his critical nose at really well-cooked dishes; and by remarking to his sister, in no subdued tone, that the Irish (the waiters were mostly imports from the Emerald Isle) were, without exception, the most filthy, thriftless, contemptible

people on the face of the globe; and he wondered that respectable ship-owners would charter their vessels to bring such rubbish to our shores.

When Laramont ventured a look of mild rebuke, at this unbecoming insolence, Mr. Bennett intimated that this was, or ought to be, a free country; and if things had come to such a pass that a native, "to the manor born," couldn't speak his mind from fear of the papists, it was time to defend ourselves, with the ballot-box, against domineering foreign influence. Mr. Laramont blandly declined politics, as a sauce for side-dishes, and thus the matter dropped. That night Mr. Bennett's coat was stolen from the porter's office; and, next morning, he pulled his bell-rope with a dozen furious jerks, before discovering that the wire was broken. A villainous pair of old brogans had taken the place of the French boots left outside his chamber-door, and his shaving water came up cold. So much for Mr. Bennett's antecedents, and now to our story.

Elvira had not been satisfied with the effect produced by the blue flounced dress and all its adjuncts, for, truth to tell, she had, through the entire course of the meal, felt herself eclipsed by the more brilliant showiness of her new friend.

Dinner being over, our trio made their way to the "Ladies' drawing-room," which Miss Bennett entered with one side of her skirt raised just sufficiently to display an elaborately wrought lace under-robe. She wore a black silk dress, flounced to the waist, with scarlet belt and wrist-ribbons. Her head was thrown far back, and her whole attitude seemed to say—

"All ye, who have eyes to admire, prepare to use them now."

Her head-dress baffles my poor powers of description, and with its loops, plaits, curls, puffs, laces, ribbons, flowers, and long streamers of black velvet wrought with threads of gold, would have driven an artist frantic. But we must not do Miss Bennett the injustice of describing her apparel and neglecting herself. In figure, she is considerably above the medium height, (I believe this is the orthodox mode of description generally in vogue with story-tellers,) with well-turned shoulders, and the approved pipe-stem waist. She has abundant dark-brown hair, which curls

quite naturally, after being kept in papers twenty-four hours or so; a brilliant red and white complexion, prettily formed mouth, turn-up nose, and fine, flashing eyes, neither shy nor soft in lustre.

If it be true that your really beautiful woman is indifferent to flattery, on the score of good looks, then we can not award the palm of beauty to Miss Bennett, as she is by no means indifferent to personal compliments.

Miss Adelphine was twenty-five (she acknowledged to twenty-two,) when Elvira made her acquaintance; and to no one was it a greater matter of astonishment than to herself, that, at that time of life, she still remained single. It certainly was not because she did not give the city eligibles, whom she numbered amongst her acquaintances, frequent opportunities of meeting her. Nearly every pleasant day she was to be seen, any time between the hours of eleven and two, promenading our most fashionable thoroughfares; not shrinking in the least from the boldly admiring glances her manner seemed rather to court than otherwise, sometimes even carrying the war into the enemy's territory, by despatching a well-aimed, quivering shaft from her own dark, flashing orbs.

At ball and assembly, she was also to be found; and there her tablets were invariably well filled with names of the most desirable partners the rooms contained. But when these same *desirables* came to the more serious matter of choosing partners for life, they passed Miss Bennett by, giving the preference to those very wall-flowers which had been so often cast into the shade by her superior brilliancy; but which, nevertheless, bloomed sweetly in the privacy of domestic life, unsunned by admiring glances from indiscriminate crowds, deprived of which, Miss Bennett would have pined and languished.

Neither was Miss Adelphine, by any means, unapproachable; thoroughly well versed, as she was, in all the tactics of fashionable flirtation; from the first half-veiled glance of timid interest, to the gracious acceptance of floral tokens, and all those permissible gallantries which mean nothing, and are as easily cast aside as the style of last year's hat or talma. It had never even so

much as occurred to her, that those brilliant, showy qualities which she cultivated to the exclusion of all others, *might* not be the ones best calculated to light up the quiet fireside with "purest ray serene." She recked not that, as a general rule, a man of sense, in seriously choosing the companion who is to share his joys, to soothe his sorrows in life's rough and thorny pathway, gives the gentler feminine graces the preference, over those more dashing attributes which characterize women of the Miss Bennett stamp—women who, however they may flash and dazzle in street and assembly, are yet incapable of dispensing that mild, benignant lustre which gives home joys "a smack of paradise."

CHAPTER IX.

GETTING INTO GOOD SOCIETY.

Returning once more from our long digression, proceed we with our story.

The first gentleman to whom Elvira was introduced, in the drawing-room at Laramont's, was Mr. Trueburn, editor of the "Weekly Cauterizer," who sat glancing over the file of papers he held in his hand, seemingly too much absorbed in their contents to accord any one more than a passing salutation.

He was a short, square-shouldered, strongly built man, with a massive head, and features which would have been somewhat heavy in expression if they had not been lighted up by a pair of piercing grey eyes, deep set under overhanging brows, on which a phrenologist would have discerned indications of a rare development of the perceptive faculties.

He did not often take part in the conversation of his fellow-boarders, but when appealed to for his opinion on any subject, generally gave it in full, with an upright and downright truthfulness of expression, that left his hearers silenced if not convinced.

It was by no means uncommon to hear his best friends remark: "Ask Trueburn a question and he will give you an oration in reply."

He had formerly been a room-mate of Mr. Bennett's, but they had separated for the following reasons:

Mr. Trueburn was very systematic in all his proceedings, and allowed himself exactly six hours for sleep, retiring at eleven and rising at five. Accordingly, the appointed hour found the two gentlemen in their room, and five minutes later Mr. Trueburn was comfortably in bed, wooing "tired nature's sweet restorer," which was seldom slow in coming to his embrace. Not so Mr. Bennett, who was punctilious to a fault in all his preparations for repose. Not an article of which he divested himself, from each particular stocking, particularly folded over each particular boot, to rings, sleeve-buttons and shirt-pin but must be carefully bestowed, each in its own proper receptacle. Then there were his hyacinthine locks to be thoroughly brushed out and rolled up anew over bits of twisted paper; and his imperial and fondly cherished moustache (strange that with such anxious culture it should thrive so poorly!) were by no means to be neglected. A faint perfume of "pomade divine" was to be perceived in the room during this process. A resort to the ewer follows.

Before the toilette-glass—talk of *female* vanity, who will!—he deliberately arranges his handsome night-coif.

"Don't be an old Betty. Have done with all that prinking, and give a person a chance to go to sleep, will you?" calls out Mr. Trueburn, with drowsy irritability.

Whereupon Mr. Bennett slowly commences—shade of Apollo, forgive this "profane intrusion upon greater than Elusinian mysteries!—slowly commences unlacing his stays, and arraying himself in his *robe de nuit*, snugly tucks himself into bed? Not a bit of it: Mr. Bennett's not the man to woo the balmly goddess in such unseemly guise. But, gently insinuating himself beneath the snowy counterpane, and reclining his head (never mind the excruciating curl-papers, sir!) upon an untumbled pillow, this self-compassionating victim of the tender passion resigns himself to tranquil slumbers. With a groan of relief, his victimized

companion follows his example, with a mental resolve not to witness many repetitions of the scene.

To return to the drawing room, whence, without any apology, we have a second time strayed.

Miss Pettigrew was the first young lady to whom Elvira was presented. A single word as to this young person, and we proceed with our narrative. Several months previously, she had set up as a rival beauty to Miss Bennett (all in a friendly way, of course), but her stock of good looks proved to be too small for successfully sustaining the competition, and so the attempt resulted in failure. Since which time she has again commenced operations on a capital consisting of interesting amiability, engaging weaknesses and ostentatious benevolence. In exercising this latter virtue, she practiced the most rigid impartiality, giving alike to the just and to the unjust. As a natural result of this indiscriminate alms-giving, her benefactions not rarely went to encourage idleness and vagabondage—to say nothing of their sometimes ministering to the worst forms of vice.

We will devote but a short paragraph to a description of her personal appearance.

She was tall, slim in figure, and her head seemed disproportionately small, in comparison with her height; this defect, however, was in a measure remedied by the full heavy bandeaux, adopted through the suggestion of an artistic hair-dresser.

She was narrow-shouldered and hollow-chested, but these were facts known only to the most judicious of dress-makers.

Pretty, regular features had Miss Pettigrew; but, in contrast with the mature bloom of Miss Bennett, her complexion looked faded, her blue eyes dim, and her lips far from ruby red.

"What have you been doing with yourself, to day?" asked the former of the latter lady, in a careless tone; for she was covertly watching the movements of a gentleman who, the week before, had taken up his abode at Laramont's. She had met him at a soirée on the previous evening, and danced with him twice. He was gradually making his way across the drawing-room, and, although stopping at every other moment to exchange a few words with this or that acquaintance, she began t

exult in the idea that he was slowly, but surely, approaching herself. Her heart swelled with the secret consciousness of power. Her bloom deepened, and her eyes filled with a brilliant light.

Let me here remark, that it was chiefly amongst new-comers her short-lived conquests were made.

At last Mr. Melville was within speaking distance of her. She received him with a look of surprise (how real, the reader knows), not having had the remotest idea that he was in the room, unobservant creature that she was; and she gave him one of her most fascinating smiles of welcome. Quite flattered by the cordiality of his reception, he contrived to possess himself of a seat beside her. She no longer craved the society of Mrs. Leroy, who had thus far followed her like her shadow. She had no thoughts for any one but her new admirer, for such, she had already assured herself, Mr. Melville had become. All the while that she was talking to him, in what she deemed her most attractive style, she was casting about, in her own mind, for some means of ridding herself of Elvira.

Lucky inspiration! Observing her cousin, Maximus Rufflewell, at the other side of the room, she beckoned him to approach, and introduced him to Mrs. Leroy. With clever intuition, he saw in a moment how matters stood, and what was required of him. Dexterously managing to detach Elvira from his cousin, he led the former to an unoccupied window-seat.

One word about Mr. Rufflewell before proceeding farther:—By the mercantile community he was much admired; and often quoted as an example worthy of all imitation by the rising generation. When a boy, he had come to Boston with all his worldly possessions tied up in a pocket-handkerchief, and slung over his shoulder on a stout walking-stick, cut and trimmed by his own good jack-knife; and, by his own unaided exertions, had raised himself to the head of a large dry-goods jobbing establishment, universally supposed to be in a most thriving condition. To be sure, some of his business operations had not been very creditable exponents of his heart or his morals; but what of that? he had never laid himself open to the law, and if a man

be but wealthy, society is not over fastidious as to the means by which such wealth has been acquired. Reputedly rich, of fine personal appearance, and gentlemanly address, is it any matter of surprise that he should be received as a welcome and honored guest by our highest social circles?

Placing himself beside Elvira, on the window-seat, he opened the conversation by a few common-place remarks on the fashions. Stripes, he informed his companion, who was deeply gratified at receiving so important a piece of information, were to take the place of plaids, in dress goods, for the coming season. Blues and violets were to be the prevailing shades, no matter what the complexion of the wearer; and as the winter bonnets were to be mostly composed of feathers, flowers and lace, the cloaks being mere circular capes, and honiton undersleeves all the rage, it was but charitable to hope the season would be a mild one.

Elvira responded with fervor, to the expression of this hope, without perceiving its irony; and afterwards volunteered several not very astute observations on the personal appearance of those present. How sweetly Miss Bennett dressed; did Mr. Rufflewell think her very handsome? He was careful not to overpraise his cousin's beauty.

What an interesting young gentleman Mr. Bennett appeared, but how sad he always looked, was there any particular reason for this?

"A disappointment of the heart," Mr. Rufflewell said, with impressive seriousness.

Elvira was all sympathy, and Mr. Rufflewell bit his lip to hide a smile. Then followed some sentimental nonsense on the lady's part, which, so her listener afterwards confessed to a friend, would have bored him intolerably, had he not perceived that some half-dozen of his acquaintances present were looking decidedly envious at his good fortune in engrossing the attention of such a deuced fine woman as Mrs. Leroy.

"What sweet dimples Miss Pettigrew has," said Elvira, with amiable admiration.

"One need not look across the room to see much lovelier ones," was the gallant rejoinder.

Elvira blushed and simpered. "What an agreeable man Mr. Rufflewell was, to be sure. So polite, and so attentive!" With what a grace he arranged a footstool for her convenience, and restored the handkerchief she had dropped. Elvira was so pleased and fluttered that she failed to note the significant smiles exchanged between different occupants of the room, by whom she was closely observed.

Was Mr. Rufflewell to blame that Mrs. Leroy could only be entertained by stale compliments, and the most vapid of small talk? He was too well-bred, too highly skilled in the art of making himself agreeable, to pitch the key of conversation, even so much as a semitone, above the comprehension of his listener. It was not his fault that her head had never been put to any higher use than that of displaying its owner's tresses, or the latest style of bonnet and head-dress.

If woman would become the companion, counsellor, and friend of man, instead of the plaything with which he amuses a leisure hour, let her make herself worthy of his lasting esteem and regard. Let her *become* man's equal, if she would be recognized by him as such. When I say his "equal" I intend not the remotest allusion to the relative superiority of the sexes—a theme that has suggested much that is both invidious and absurd. But assuredly the weaker sex is capable of better things than a useless indulgence in the fripperies and frivolities of fashionable life—the paltry ambition of shining in society, and eclipsing one's neighbors in show and splendor.

Not in the pulpit, or on the political forum, would I see woman shine; but why should she not be educated to the pursuit of some lofty and ennobling aim in life? and if this pursuit involve the attainment of the highest order of intellectual culture, why should not the same facilities be granted to her, as to man, for the acquisition of the same?

Although one of the proudest and most powerful nations in the world is ruled by a woman, it by no means follows that the more humble members of the sisterhood are capable of legislating in their own behalf. If a queen *does* read her own speeches in the British Parliament, our notions of decency and propriety

would be none the less outraged to hear Miss Smith, the member from Ohio, making a rancorous political speech in our National Halls. Disclaiming any such ambition for my countrywomen, I may yet be permitted to say that I heartily rejoice to know that female colleges, and female M. D.'s, are established facts in our favored land. Let woman raise the standard of her mental endowments, and prove herself capable of using, without abusing, the "rights" for which she clamors, and, I doubt not, all reasonable demands on this score will be graciously conceded to her.

To return from this digression: Miss Bennett, professing to find the fire, which had just been lighted to allay the chill arising from a damp east wind, uncomfortably warm, proposed moving to another part of the room. Mr. Melville rose to accompany her, but was stopped on his way by a friend; and Miss Bennett, not a little out of humor, at this derangement of her plans, joined her brother.

"And so you wished to get farther away from the grate; though the room doesn't seem very warm to me," he said, with a shiver.

"That answered as well as anything else for an excuse," she rejoined, in a low tone; "but the fact is, I wanted to get a little farther away from Mr. Trueburn. He reads me through and through, I know; and though his eyes are on his paper, not a look or a tone escapes him. It is very annoying to be watched, in this way; and I was bound not to furnish him, any longer, with a study for one of those 'Phases of City Life,' which I am almost sure he writes himself."

"Confound his impudence!" said Mr. Bennett, drawing himself up with the very loftiest air he was capable of assuming; for he was quite flattered by his handsome sister's confidence, which was very rarely vouchsafed to him. "Had I better run against him? or smash his corns? or"——

"Pooh! hadn't you better make a fool of yourself, and get served up with *sauce-piquante*, as a relish for the readers of next week's 'Cauterizer?'" interposed the amiable Adelphine. "If you know when you are well off, you will let Mr. Trueburn

alone. And now, if you please, go up stairs and bring me my large India fan; you will find it on my dressing-table."

Sulkily, and with a muttered anathema against the ingratitude and captiousness of all womankind, Mr. Bennett went to execute his sister's commission. When he returned with the fan, it was no longer needed as a screen from the too observant editor, Mr. Melville having left the room.

Miss Bennett, no longer finding the heat uncomfortable, returned to her seat, near Miss Pettigrew.

"What have you been doing with yourself to-day?" asked Miss Bennett, repeating the question whose answer had been cut short by the approach of Mr. Melville.

"I have been trying to relieve the poor and needy, and have only reaped black ingratitude for my pains," replied Miss Pettigrew, with a pathetic air.

"It is the way of the world, to be unthankful," said Mr. Bennett, with a glance at his sister. She smiled half contemptuously, and asked Miss Pettigrew who it was that had proved so unworthy of her charities.

"You remember the poor miserable creature I told you of, last night, that told me such a pitiful story about his wife being just gone in the consumption, and his child wasting away, from the want of proper food and care. Well, I gave him five dollars; and what do you think he did with it? Got as drunk as a beast, beat his wife black and blue, and dragged his poor sick child about the room by the hair of the head. That is all the benefit his family received from my bounty. The policeman that had the man in charge, as a common drunkard, told me all about it, this morning. But that isn't the only thing I've had to make me feel badly to-day. You know that poor family, in Broad street, I've done so much towards supporting, the past year. I went down there, to-day, to carry the mother some clothes I have been making for her; and so I took a little basket of niceties, for the children. On my way back, I stepped into a confectioner's for an ice-cream, when I found that my portemonnaie was missing. I knew I had it in my pocket, at Mrs. Maclinger's, so back I started for Broad street. When I was

about half way there, I saw Tom. Maclinger, a great strapping fellow of sixteen, going into a provision store. Pretty quickly he came out, with a big basket full of potatoes and cabbage, and a leg of veal on top. I stepped up to him, to ask about my porte-monnaie; but the very minute he laid eyes on me, he dropped the basket, and ran like the mischief. I do believe the wretch had picked my pocket, while I was at his mother's, or why was he so frightened at the sight of me?"

"Sure enough: the young reprobate!" said Miss Bennett, laughing.

"And to think," continued Miss Pettigrew, in a tone of strong indignation, "how much pains I have taken to teach those children to read, and say the catechism."

"Your instructions seem to have borne but bitter fruits," said Mr. Trueburn.

"I believe you," she replied. "I never was so deceived in my life, *never*. I had a great mind to send a policeman after the young thief, and I would, only I should have the trouble of appearing against him, at the court-room, and all that; besides, he would very likely deny the theft, and I might be unable to prove it."

"Would it not have been better for you to have carried them the meat and vegetables, in the first place, instead of that little basket of niceties, which, perhaps, only whetted their appetites for more substantial food?"

"Mercy!" cried Miss Pettigrew, aghast at the supposition, "do you suppose I would be seen tugging such a load as *that* along the streets?"

"Assuredly not," replied Mr. Trueburn; "I know better than to expect that one of our city ladies should carry home with her any larger purchase than a spool of cotton or a thimble; but the provision dealer's boy would have carried for you whatever you desired."

"What a pity, when you know so well how things ought to be done, that you are not benevolent yourself," innocently suggested Miss Pettigrew.

The general smile, occasioned by this remark, did not in least disturb Mr. Trueburn's composure.

Still Mrs. Leroy listens, with looks of pleasure, to the hon words of the assiduous Mr. Ruffiewell, who still maintains post at her side. She heeds not that there has been an addi to the circle of loungers, standing about the door leading to hall. It is her husband, who is so intently regarding her. dapper dry-goods clerk, after sharply eyeing the new-comer, creases the distance between them, and turns him a cold sho der. Mr. Leroy may be the best man in the world, for aught *he* knows to the contrary; but what of that, if his manners hav not the polish of "good society," if his hands are hard with hon est toil, and his garb that of the active mechanic? The aristo cratic nose of young Tapestiks scents vulgarity in the air, an with a wave of his perfumed handkerchief, he disdainfully brus es it aside. With cool indifference Mr. Leroy surveys this litt process; not a dozen Tapestiks could disturb his equanimity.

Although having come purposely in search of his wife, M Leroy makes no attempt to approach her, now that his gaze ha sought her ought. There is no anger, but a deep sadness on h face, as he remembers how few weeks have passed since tho eyes, now so boldly raised to another's, fell beneath his slighte glance. How diffident she had then seemed of expressing h opinions before him! how careful to avoid exciting his displea ure! The only theme on which she conversed with unreserv being that of Ellen's loneliness, and want of female companio ship. Had he been blind? he asked himself, or had Elvira sy tematically deceived him? To the latter supposition he coul not bear to give credence; but how else account for the sudde transformation of the low-toned, shrinking girl to the loud-voice self-willed woman, who, since their marriage, had seemed bent on having her own way, at all hazards?—and who now, qui regardless of the observation of those about her, openly flirte with an utter stranger. He went back to their sitting-roo alone. Elvira had entirely forgotten his message, promising a early return, or she might not have remained as long as she di in the drawing-room.

"By Jove," said Mr. Ruffiewell to his cousin Adelphine, after Elvira had left to go up stairs, "I positively felicitate myself, ungallant as it may sound, that I have been wise enough never to have bound myself for life—a slave to woman's caprice. Coquettes at heart are they, the very best of them. No sooner do they get the noose matrimonial fairly adjusted to the neck of the poor doomed victim of their charms, than they are on the lookout for fresh hearts to conquer."

"Inconstancy, thy name is woman," sighed forth Mr. Bennett in sentimental languishment.

His sister laughed outright, greatly to his disgust, and somewhat to the confusion of his ardent sympathizer, Miss Pettigrew.

"I was merely smiling," said Miss Bennett, "to think how often a *man's* heart may be conquered, without receiving any permanent injury, or making an honorable capitulation. Can you assist me in coming to an accurate conclusion on this subject, Cousin Maximus?"

Cousin Maximus, conveniently deaf to this question, beat a hasty retreat; whereupon, Miss Pettigrew regained her composure, and Mr. Bennett *seemed* to lose himself in a tender and regretful reverie.

When Mr. Leroy entered his sitting-room, Ellen saw from the expression of his face, that she was not to expect a renewal of that pleasant chit-chat that had made the dinner-hour pass so quickly. Nevertheless, with kindliest tact, she strove to lead him again to speak of his own business affairs; hoping that thus the gloom might gradually be dispelled from his brow; but his answers to her gentle questionings were curt, almost cross. She gave up the vain attempt to cheat him of his grief, and took up her needle-work, pausing now and then to steal a glance at the face which was not wont to wear an unkindly veil for her. Cold and stern it was; there was no mistaking that fact. Raising his eyes, suddenly, he gave her a look almost passionately reproachful, as though she had been the cause of all he was suffering. Her face flushed with resentment; for all her kind endeavors at consolation, was *this* a meet return?

"You do not understand me; I believe you never will," he

said, in a tone of suppressed vehemence very unusual with him.

"How can I, when you are so strange, so changed?" she asked, in an unsteady voice, whose tremulousness seemed to irritate him, as conveying a tacit reproach for his own harshness.

He sprang from his chair, and paced the room with impatient strides. Abruptly he paused before her.

"Am I hideous to look at? Am I repulsive in person? Answer me truly, Ellen."

She looked at him almost in fear. Had he taken leave of his senses, that his eyes were so full of fire, his words so strange, his manner so imperious? Was this impassioned man the quiet and self-controlled benefactor of former days? He seized her arm so roughly as to force from her lips a cry of pain, and said peremptorily,

"Answer!"

"You know you are nothing of the kind," she replied with tears in her eyes.

"Then is the fault in my mind? Is my character so repulsive that I can never win the love of woman like another man? Must I go through life without being dearer than the crowd to a single human being?"

The color came and went on Ellen's cheek. She was trembling beneath the searching gaze which seemed determined to read her very soul. She dared not raise her eyes, and replied only by a negative shake of the head. To her inexpressible relief, he turned away, threw himself into a chair, and buried his face in his hands. Presently he came round to her side again.

"Ellen, I have made a very absurd exhibition of my own weakness before you: can you forget it?" He held out his hand. She gave him her own, feeling that this was not the moment to oppose him, even in trifles.

"You have so spoiled me by years of kindness, Mr. Leroy"——

"Don't," he said, deprecatingly, "make me hate myself by speaking of the kindness that was. I have not been myself, to-night; but because I suffer through others, that is no reason

why I should be unjust to you. When I say, I suffer, I know you will bear with me. I could explain all to you, if you wished such an explanation. You might not respect me more; but, at least, you would understand me better. If my domestic relations are not such as I had hoped they would become, do you wish me to tell you so?"

Ellen drew back, with a troubled look on her face.

"You are right," he said; "we will never mention the subject again."

They were sometime silent; and then he said, as if communing with his own thoughts, and scarcely aware of Ellen's presence:—"I am already tired to death of this sort of life. I feel as I used to do, while stopping at a noisy public-house, restless, and as though I must hurry on and get home. Just listen to that tramp, tramping of feet, up and down stairs, on the other side of the wall. Why wouldn't it be just as easy for those people to speak a little lower, and step a little lighter? But no; this, I suppose, would not be consistent with the practice of republican independence."

Ellen ventured a timid suggestion, to the effect that custom would reconcile him to much that now seemed unpleasant from the violent contrast it offered to the retired life he had so long led.

He looked incredulous, and not long after made an inquiry relative to the needle-work on which she was so industriously engaged.

"It is the cloth talma I am embroidering for Elvira," she replied, holding it up. "Isn't it pretty?"

"It is very well," he rejoined; "but I would rather not see you working at it so steadily. I do not wish you to sew from morning till night for Elvira; and I *do* wish you to go out and get the air every day; also, to go down to the drawing-room with Elvira whenever she chooses to go."

The last-named lady made her appearance as her husband finished speaking; and going to the mirror, arranged the ribbons in her hair, with an approving glance at her reflected figure in the glass.

"How long have you been home, Laurence?" she asked, carelessly.

"Over an hour," he coldly replied.

"As long as that? Why have you not been down after me, in all this time?"

"I did come down for you, but you were so pleasantly occupied that I forebore to disturb you."

An angry glow overspread her face.

"I hope, Mr. Leroy, that I can talk for half an hour to any gentleman I choose—before a room full of people, too—without your being jealous of me. You will only make yourself the laughing-stock of the whole house, if you go to doing anything so ridiculous."

"Mrs. Leroy, there is no occasion for your speaking to me in this way," he said, with offended dignity. "I believe I have never yet treated you with disrespect; all I ask of you is a return in kind. I have endured much, and I will endure yet more, for the sake of keeping peace in the family; but you may go too far, as you may one day find, to your cost. If my indulging your humors makes you overbearing for the future, instead of grateful for the past, then 'tis the poorest policy I can pursue, and the sooner I change it the better."

"I never knew you to be so unkind in my life, before," cried Elvira, bursting into tears.

For once, they failed to move her husband, who took his hat and silently left the room. Ellen had made her escape soon after Elvira's entrance. The latter, not choosing to dim the brightness of her eyes for nothing, dried them with all speed. Something like a smile even came to her lips, as she adjusted the killing little bow attached to her chemisette. The words of flattery she had heard within the hour still rang in her ears with most harmonious cadence. How pleasant, with such a cross, unreasonable husband, to know herself not wholly unappreciated!

CHAPTER X.

ONLY A MECHANIC.

As weeks went by, at Laramont's, the acquaintance between Miss Bennett and Elvira, possessing as they did so many points in common, gradually became more intimate; although an astute observer might have remarked that the former lady called on the latter at such hours as she was sure of finding her husband absent, thus avoiding the disagreeable contingency of being, some day, forced to present a laboring mechanic to any of the more exclusive amongst her own set. Elvira had no suspicion of this, and boarding-house life suited her to a marvel; but Ellen missed the pleasant domestic duties which had varied her hours, and cheered her spirits with the delightful consciousness of days well spent in useful occupation. Then she found nothing in her present position to atone for the loss of those old evening conversations, so unrestrained and free, in the course of which, Mr. Leroy had come in possession of whatever mental treasure she had gleaned in her miscellaneous reading for the day.

Ellen, in obedience to Mr. Leroy's request, sometimes accompanied Elvira to the drawing-room; but the mingling of many-toned voices, and the ever-changing positions of a room-full of people, confused and oppressed her. In a crowd she felt alone. Mr. Rufflewell, to be sure, did so far take pity on her loneliness as to waste on her untaught perceptions several of his most exquisitely turned compliments, which were received with such unaffected indifference that he declared her to be utterly devoid of taste, and a mere child in manners.

Mr. Bennett, also, encouraged by that look of patient resignation which tells of disappointments that have yielded the priceless harvest of meek endurance,—a look now habitual to her face,—confided to her his settled conviction that this was a sad world, where the sensitive spirit was daily torn and lacerated by the thorns of life; and that he, for one, wouldn't be sorry to be well

out of it. This avowal struck her as so utterly ludicrous, coming as it did, from a gentleman dressed in the extreme of fashion, with fingers bejewelled like a lady's, and his curled locks, even to his silky imperial, dispensing odorous perfumes, that she could not restrain a smile. That smile sealed her doom in Mr. Bennett's estimation. To him, it proved conclusively her entire lack of feeling and sympathy.

Miss Pettigrew, who had made up her mind to hate Ellen on noticing the approach of the charming Augustus, as at heart she termed Mr. Bennett, ended by patronizing her; and, as the really gentle and amiable have seldom the easiest time of it in this selfish world of ours, Ellen was finally called upon for so many favors, from that of arranging a crumpled head-dress to embroidering a chemisette "like the one worn by sweet Mrs. Leroy," that she came, at last, to have scarcely a moment she could call her own.

There is no knowing how long things might have gone on, in this way, Ellen being of an eminently obliging disposition, if Miss Pettigrew had not called upon her to furnish a box of fancy articles for the "Ragged boys'" fair, at a table of which the former was to preside. This request, from lack of time and means, Ellen was obliged to decline; whereupon, Miss Pettigrew became disinclined to associate, on terms of intimacy, with one whose heart was not "open as day to melting charity." She had never thought of soliciting subscriptions from Miss Bennett or Elvira, (Mr. Bennett had bestowed a wash-bowl and ewer of papier mache, and an infant's frock of silk tissue); but professed herself to be deeply wounded at the uncharitable cold-heartedness of one she had mistaken for a kindred spirit. It was no loss to Ellen—that of this one-sided intimacy—which had been very expensive to her, in the way of time and comfort.

"Laurence, my dear," said Elvira, one day, to her husband, who rather shrank from terms of endearment she rarely bestowed on him unless she had some particular object to gain thereby, "I am going to ask a favor which I have quite set my heart upon your granting, so make up your mind not to refuse me. There is going to be a delightful military ball, the first of the week, and

Miss Bennett has offered to take me along with her; wasn't it kind of her? I know you will not mind being left alone, just one evening, (Ellen will be here, you know,) I've been out so little, this winter. Now do say you will spare me, this once, there's a darling." And she wound her arms about his neck, and playfully kissed him on either cheek.

"I will do better than that," he replied kindly, a feeling of relief stealing over him that she had asked nothing he felt compelled to refuse; "I will go to the ball with you myself, as you have set your heart upon going."

"Miss Bennett asked me to go in the carriage, with herself and brother, and I shall be a perfect stranger in the ball-room without her to introduce me. Besides, I hadn't the least idea you were a dancing man," said Elvira, in some confusion.

"I had an uncle who was a dancing-master, and a very good one at that, so you needn't be afraid of my disgracing you as a partner," he said, smilingly. "Then, as to your being separated from your friends, the Bennetts, perhaps I can make arrangements to hire half of the same carriage that is coming for them, if you will introduce me to Mr. Bennett."

"O, you can't do that, for a cousin of theirs—a Mr. Rufflewell—has spoken for a seat in the same carriage with them," said Elvira, coloring.

"Never mind, then we will go by ourselves," said Mr. Leroy, in quick, decisive tone, "and you can join the Bennetts in the cloak-room or hall."

It was thus they went to the ball, which Elvira enjoyed but indifferently well; Mr. Rufflewell keeping aloof, and not even requesting the pleasure of once dancing with her; while Miss Bennett, the star of the evening, surrounded by her own immediate circle of friends and admirers, contented herself with bowing across the room to the mortified Elvira. As for taking up Mr. Leroy, and presenting him to the very persons who had, possibly, but just been honoring him with orders for repairing a sink or a wash-tub, of course Miss Bennett considered it quite out of the question; and could not believe Elvira so ignorant of the ways of *good society* as to expect it of her. An actual

worker in the social hive, to think of associating, on terms of equality, with the delicate and tenderly nurtured drones! was ever anything so absurdly preposterous? Assuredly, Miss Bennett thought not.

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Spring-time was nearly past, when, one day, Mr. Leroy said to his wife:

"It is now six months since we came to Laramont's, and I am satisfied of two things; first, that this place will never seem like home to me; and, second, that it costs us too much to live here."

"I am sure I don't see why it should," she rejoined, "when I economize in every possible way. Ellen cuts and makes all my dresses, trims my bonnets, and works all my collars and under-sleeves. You ought to see Miss Bennett's bills for laces and embroideries, if you think *I* am extravagant."

"I did not accuse you of extravagance, Elvira; but what I say is, that since I have been here, I have not earnt enough to pay our way; and, right in the prime of life as I am, I ought not only to have done that, but to have added something to the provision against sickness, if it should be sent upon us, or old age, if we should be spared to see it."

"I can't understand," said Elvira, almost pettishly, "why it is that *you* cannot get along as well as other people. There is Mr. Rufflewell, he began life with nothing, and see how he lives now, with his splendid suit of rooms, his horse and phaeton, and all that. Why cannot you live as well as he does?"

"That is nothing to the question; it is enough that I cannot," was the somewhat impatient rejoinder.

"I am sure it is very unkind of you, Laurence, to insist on my going away from Laramont's, just as I have made the acquaintance of so many pleasant, genteel people. It would half kill me to go away from here; I couldn't be contented anywhere else."

"I am sorry you think so, and hope you will find yourself mistaken, for I have made up my mind not to stay here another month; and I have got the refusal of a small, comfortable

house, on a clean, quiet street, that I wish you to go and look at, with me, this very afternoon."

"I don't want to go; I know, beforehand, I shan't like it—a little humdrum house, in some back street, with nobodies for neighbors; besides, I can't go to house-keeping, I'm not strong enough."

"Elvira, how can you be so unreasonable? The quiet, domestic life of home would be much more healthy for you than all this confusion. Then, have you no regard for my interest? no thought for any one but yourself?"

"How cruel of you to"—she paused suddenly, and throwing up her arms, added, in a hoarse whisper, "Air—more air—open the window;" and sank back on the pillows of the lounge, the purple veins standing out on her forehead, and her eyes almost starting from their sockets, as she gasped painfully for breath.

"Ellen," shrieked Mr. Leroy, whose thoughts instinctively turned to her, in the hour of trouble. The next instant, she stood beside him. "Run for a doctor, quick," she cried, terrified at the condition in which she found Elvira.

Scarcely were the words out of her mouth, before Mr. Leroy was bounding down stairs, three at a step, and, in an incredibly short space of time, he returned with a physician he fortunately met in the street, who immediately raised Elvira to a sitting posture, and as soon as the first violence of the paroxysm was over, assisted in removing her to the bed, and propping her up with pillows.

She was speedily relieved by the application of appropriate remedies; and being still further quieted by an anodyne, the doctor took Mr. Leroy aside, to give his opinion of the case for which he had so unexpectedly been called upon to prescribe.

"She must not have another attack of this kind, if it is possible to prevent it; for, in her present delicate situation, it would be doubly alarming," said the medical adviser, with an oracular air. "I need not explain to you wherein consists the morbid action of the heart and its ventricles, from which your good lady is suffering; it is sufficient to say that cheerful

society, moderate recreation, and gentle exercise in the open a are essential to the recovery of her health. Above all thing guard her from sudden excitement, and let her wishes be gra fied, even in trifles."

From this time forth, Elvira was occasionally subject to recu rences of pain in the left side, accompanied by difficulty in breati ing, but these became less and less frequent, until they ceased to b alarming. Of course, nothing more was said by Mr. Leroy o the subject of removal from Laramont's. His conscience r proached him as having been the cause of that first overpowe ing attack of fell disease: and he could not be too thankful tha she had not fallen dead at his feet, and left him a prey to th bitterest remorse. He devoted himself to the promotion of he comfort and well-being, with an untiring assiduity he had neve before manifested in the same cause. Even the whims of hi wife were scrupulously complied with; and rarely, indeed, wa he so far thrown off his guard as to deny a request of hers, how ever unreasonable it might be.

It was only Ellen who noticed, with an occasional pang o anxiety, how pale and thin he was, week by week, becoming while there were hollow circles about his eyes, and here a there a thread of silver ran through his brown locks.

"O Laurence," cried Elvira, as they were one evening sitti alone together, "how I do wish you were in some decent bu ness; anything but a carpenter! it sounds *so* ungenteel. Wh it was only to-day that, as I was walking back and forth in t corridor for exercise (one can scarcely turn round in this roo you know), I heard a gentleman in Mr. Melville's room ask the door was ajar—'Who is this Mr. Leroy that you we speaking of?' 'A very intelligent, well-informed sort of a ma says Mr. Melville, 'but he hasn't exactly the air of a well-br gentleman; and of course your sister will hardly think of viting a common mechanic to so select a party as the one s means to give.'"

The speaker was interrupted by a tap at the door of th room. Mr. Leroy responded to the summons.

"Ah, Mr. Trueburn, glad to see you; for now we will ha

the benefit of your better judgment in settling a little question Mrs. Leroy has just started," said her husband, with animation, not observing her signals warning him to drop the subject while their caller was present. "The fact is," continued Mr. Leroy, "Elvira considers herself deeply aggrieved by a remark she accidentally overheard, to the effect that her husband was only a mechanic, and she dreads being slighted on that account."

"Only a mechanic!" repeated Mr. Trueburn, with indignant emphasis; "and what were our forefathers more? I would like to ask. They built their own log-houses; tilled their own half-cleared lands; and were filled with thanksgiving, if able to procure a sufficient quantity of beans and corn to plant them with. Didn't they exult in the freedom of true manly independence, when they were able to have framed houses over their heads? and to go comfortably clad in the homespun garb their wives and mothers spun and wove? For all this, are their memories the less to be cherished and revered? I trow not. If a man has not that within him that can give dignity to any, the humblest employment, he is not worth knowing, whatever his station in life may be."

"Perhaps not," said Elvira, pettishly; "but for all that, the people one wishes to know treat a laboring mechanic very differently from what they do a man in a genteel business or profession."

"You may be right, Mrs. Leroy; but why be so anxious to know these very people that impart to our social atmosphere the icy chill so often pervading it?—that are striving to engraft on our sturdier social growth offshoots from the old-world aristocracy, which, however well adapted to European culture, grow rank and disgusting in our republican soil."

Elvira looked puzzled, more than half angry, and wished he would talk so that a person could understand him; while Mr. Trueburn, quite indifferent to her opinion, and only intent upon expressing his own candid convictions in the case, thus proceeded:—

"How long shall we be democratic in theory? in practice, object worshipers of the most vulgar of all forms of aristocracy

—that of mere dollars and cents? Delighting to honor purse-proud mediocrity, while intellect, intelligence, the noblest attributes of head and heart, if failing to confer on their possessors success (I mean the only kind of success cordially recognized by us—pecuniary), will find no man so poor as to do them reverence. Is the epithet 'sordid money-getters,' with which we have been reproached, so wholly misapplied? Do we not, as a people, think too little of that 'worth' which Pope says 'makes the man?'—too much of the 'leather and prunella?' Do not elegance of appearance, refinement of manner, and a lavish expenditure, usurp the honors which should rather be bestowed on uprightness and moral integrity? so that we come to value a man for his *accidents*, rather than for himself. Just drive back twenty or thirty miles into the country, and look at our undrained marshes, straggling, untrimmed forests, and unsightly stone walls—these will show you how much remains to be done, before our country is transformed into the continuous garden England may be termed in comparison."

"My native land," interposed Mr. Leroy, with a half regretful yearning toward the home of his boyhood.

"Ah! I was not aware that you were foreign-born," said Mr. Trueburn; "but you have been long enough amongst us to have become Americanized in life and motive—to have become one of us."

Mr. Leroy drew in a long breath, which nearly ended in a sigh, as he said,

"Excuse my interrupting you, sir; you were saying—"

"That the sons of these old homesteads, instead of subduing untamed nature to man's kindly dominion, as the poets phrase it, are to be found behind our Boston counters, measuring off tape by the yard, or supplying a fair customer with a particular shade of dress-trimming—a more noble and manly employment, forsooth, than planting trees, under whose shade the next generation may sit; or realizing grand architectural designs—erecting lofty public edifices, or well-planned private dwellings, which shall be warmed by the sunshine and washed by the storm, long after the hands that reared them shall have mouldered back to dust.

Strange, that the less a man does to make himself of actual use to mankind at large, the more sure he should become of their high consideration! While the ranks of our mechanics are none too well filled, and our agriculturalists are half-distraught with training *raw hands*, 'Just from Cork yer honors,' to the use of the plough and the flail, you may hire a 'boy' in a store, on a salary so scanty that it is barely possible for him to pay his board and clothing bills, from the proceeds. With means so stinted, is it much to be wondered at, that poor human nature succumbs to temptation? and that the cash account sometimes falls short? or the trial-sheet refuses to balance?"

"When shall we learn to appreciate the true dignity of labor? to be as independent in our social, as our political, creed? instead of apeing the manners and customs of older nations, which as ill becomes us, as would the cast-off clothes of his grandfather, the lusty proportions of some half-grown stripling. Look at our towns and villages, and see how matters go there. Many a man admirably calculated for holding a plough or hammering an anvil, but, in homely mercantile parlance, without a particle of trade in him, despising manual labor, and panting for riches, no matter how amassed, must needs set up as a country store-keeper. So down he comes to our goodly metropolis, bearing a letter of recommendation signed by the selectmen of the town, perhaps,—I've heard of such occurrences,—on the strength of which he buys a large stock of goods on a long credit; goes home in jubilant mood; gets out a flaming circular, soliciting the patronage of his acquaintances in particular, and everybody in general; and, launching his ill-rigged, top-heavy mercantile craft, sails away, with a great show of canvass, to be sure, but not an experienced mariner on board, or a single anchor to cast astern, when the storms and the winds shall rise. Right and left, he sells; sometimes at a small profit, sometimes at none at all; all the while supporting his family from the proceeds of these sales.

"At the end of the first year, he is forced to beg an extension of his creditors; and by the end of the second or third, 'bursts up' with one grand explosion; his books revealing heavy liabilities, *with only a three years'* store-lease and his small remnant of

stock in trade as assets. His house and farm are found to decded to his brother, or some near relative, to cancel a mo gage thereupon, *not* of long standing. Of the bond he holds, quiring restitution of this deed on demand, he is, in obedience legal advice, wholly oblivious. Well, his affairs are wound u his creditors paid off, at the rate of five or ten cents on a dollar and our *unfortunate* storekeeper, none the worse off for his break down, if we except some slight damage to his credit, and with all his property safely 'out of his hands,' is ready for any new *enterprise* that may turn up."

"But, sir," interposed Mr. Leroy, "such things would not be tolerated in a decently moral community; you must have been giving us a fancy sketch."

"Not a bit of it; I know of more than one 'firm' in the city, doing business on the long credit system, whose partners are thankful to find, at the close of the year, that their *bad debts* have not swallowed up more than a third of their profits."

Mr. Leroy looked startled.

"The anxiety," he said, "caused by such a state of affairs, must be wearing to body and mind; and almost destroy one's faith in human goodness, one's enjoyment of life."

"Well," said Mr. Trueburn, smiling, but not gaily, "with the greatest privileges of any nation in the world, scarcely knowing the pressure of actual want, are we generally known as a happy or enjoyable people? Are we not, by common consent, a race of lank-bodied dyspeptics? I believe it is generally conceded that a certain degree of mental quietude is indispensable to the healthy performance of those functions essential to the well-being of the human economy; but of all the restless, dissatisfied, aspiring mortals, on the face of the globe, a cadaverous Yankee, intent solely on bettering his worldly condition, is certainly the most pitiable. Never mind if he has retired with his hundreds of thousands, you shall see him devoured with gloom and spleen, if his pet investments depreciate in value, or fail, even for a season, to return him a fair dividend.

"I hope that our very pulpits may not become tainted with this moral leprosy—this wide-spread lust of riches, which dries

up the springs of godliness in our hearts; and that those whom conscience calls to the ministerial ranks may not shrink from entering the vineyards of the Lord, because earthly fortunes are not to be acquired therein. Heaven help us, if our spiritual guides strive to serve God and mammon; for in that case, what is to prevent our falling into the ditch?

"I am not talking of the 'naughtiness of riches,' in themselves considered; for I know that many of the wisest and best in our land have been blessed with the gifts of fortune, and have exercised a just stewardship over the same; but I do firmly believe, that for man (endowed, as he is, with attributes so lofty as to make him rank but little lower than the angels,) to make mere money-getting the sole end and aim of his being, suffering the higher and nobler faculties of his nature to run to waste for want of culture, is a sin, and a crime against his own soul, for which God will not hold him guiltless. But when society becomes really established on the broad basis of Christian love and charity, and this inordinate thirst of gain dies out in our midst, I suppose the millennium will be nigh at hand; and we moralizing 'Cauterizers' may hang our harps on the willows, for want of employ.

"When I came in to hand you the evening paper, I had no idea of so far taxing your patience as a listener."

He made a hasty and unceremonious exit.

"I am glad he is gone," cried Elvira, spitefully; "I never could bear him. A regular old fogy; Mr. Bennett says he is—never can talk like any other man—always must be on the contrary side of the question, whichever it is. He doesn't come in very often, that is one comfort."

The door opened and Mr. Trueburn reëntered the room. She colored with confusion; but a glance at his unmoved countenance assured her that her remarks had not been overheard.

"I believe I dropped a paper here, Mrs. Leroy; with your permission, I will look for it."

"Certainly; ah, here it is," she said, handing him a folded sheet. "We hoped you had come back to spend the remainder *of the evening with us.*"

"Not to-night, I thank you; some other time, perhaps." And again he closed the door behind him.

Elvira remained quite silent, for several minutes after his departure, as if fearing to be, a second time, surprised by his return. Her husband sat, with his head in his hands, apparently absorbed in thought. The truth was, Mr. Trueburn, in avowing thus fully his own honest convictions of right, had wounded where he meant to heal; and his truth-barbed shafts had "found aim the archer little meant."

Ellen came in from the closet she called her room, bearing in her hand a pretty straw bonnet she had been trimming with ribbon and flowers, for Elvira. The latter expressed herself highly delighted with the result of her labor; and ran to the mirror to study the effect of the new bonnet, her good-humor fully restored, on ascertaining that it was highly becoming.

"This seems a strange time to tell you, Elvira, that I am about to give up my trade, and go into business; but it is what I have made up my mind to do."

His wife dropped her bonnet. "What do you say, Laurence!" she cried, in a tone of intense eagerness.

"That I am going to open a dry goods store, on Washington street," he replied, a little uneasily, as though not quite satisfied as to the wisdom of the step he proposed taking.

"O, I am *so* delighted," cried Elvira, pushing aside, with her foot, the bonnet which a minute previously had entirely engrossed her attention, and saluting the prospective merchant with a rapturous kiss. "Won't it be perfectly charming to go a-shopping in my own husband's store? I must go and tell Miss Bennet. O, I am *so* glad."

When she had left the room, Mr. Leroy involuntarily turned toward Ellen, slightly reddening as he caught the expression of sadly earnest thoughtfulness her downcast eyes revealed.

Was it possible he had been deceived with regard to his own motives? he asked himself. Was he so changed as to care more for the good opinion of the persons he daily met—not associated with, as a general rule there was too little mental affinity between him and them for *that*—than for the approval of his own better

judgment? Was it mere greed of gain that was hurrying him into this new undertaking, for which every habit of his previous life had united to unfit him? Was it because he made haste to be rich that he was content to relinquish the vigorous, manly exercise the practice of his trade involved, and which had given strength and grace of proportion to his muscular system, life and elasticity to body and spirit, only to be "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined," behind a tradesman's counter?

These questions made themselves heard for the moment, but were speedily driven from his mind by engrossing thoughts of the new occupation so soon to be his.

He roused himself from a fit of abstraction, to ask abruptly, "What do you think of it, Ellen—this new move of mine?"

"You are not as strong as you was, brother Laurence; you are paler and thinner than when we came here; and white hairs begin to show themselves about your temples."

"Sharp-sighted! and so you think I am growing old," he said, slightly piqued at her words; for what man likes to be reminded of his first grey hairs?

"I should not have ventured on making any such allusion, if I had supposed you to be vain of your personal appearance, like that shallow Mr. Bennett, for instance."

"Subtlety!" he exclaimed, but his brow relaxed notwithstanding. He moved his chair near hers, and taking the edging, she was knitting of the finest linen thread, from her hands, quietly folded them across her lap.

"You have worked enough for to-night; besides, I want you to talk to me, and charm away the moody spirit that sometimes gets possession of me, as you used to do."

It was long months since he had so much as alluded to the old, pleasant days, spent in their former home, and Ellen's face brightened with the hope that they might yet go back to their former friendly and unrestrained intercourse.

"Now, Ellen, let me hear what you were going to say when I interrupted you."

"That I very much feared the care and anxiety of managing

a business, of which you have no practical knowledge, would too much for your strength. Why do you undertake it?"

"Because, in my present employment, I do not make mo enough to meet my expenses here; and Elvira would be ha nowhere else. If I cannot earn our support *now*, how am I make a suitable provision for old age, if Providence should gr us length of days?"

"It seems to me," said Ellen, "that it would be much be for us to economize than for you—"

"But how are we to do it, and remain here?" he abruptly terposed.

She paused a minute, before replying:—

"Many women have found means of earning their own li hood: why should I not do the same? *that*, at least, would lieve you of the burden of my support."

"Burden!" he repeated, reproachfully; "never let me you speak in that way again. Your wants are too mode and you are altogether too industrious and useful a persona ever become a burden to me or any other man. Do not s of leaving us again; I will not hear of such a thing. You know what you ask. Thank Heaven, you know nothing o daily struggles the woman must endure who is thrown ent upon her own resources for subsistence—nothing of the cold, world you would so thoughtlessly enter."

"I know enough of it," she said, with gratefully beaming "to be sure that very few persons would have taken charge desolate orphan child, as you did, without any expectation o ing ever repaid for all your kindness and care."

He gave her a quick, searching glance, which almost inst changed to a look that seemed to say: "Whence had you knowledge?"

"In the drawing-room, below, I have observed much," said, quietly. "Without intending to be an eavesdropper, I heard many things, spoken for other ears than mine. Som the boarders, the most of them, I think, take me for a quie offensive sort of a person, quite shallow in mind and feeling,

so do not mind what they say before me. I saw through them; and, in return for their slighting opinion of me, analyzed the motives they so studiously concealed from others; and formed estimates of their character, which, I am sure, are not far wrong. Was this an unworthy revenge, do you think?"

"First, let me hear the estimate you formed of the persons you have been studying; that is the more interesting theme to me, just at present."

"I found the most of them to be bound up in self, their motives all centring in their own well-being; show and style, refinement and riches, being dearer to them than real nobility of soul —than the spotless integrity of true manhood. Amongst all the casual acquaintances I have made here, not one have I found amongst them— ; but I never meant to have told you this."

"Finish your sentence," he said, with grave authority of manner.

In thought, she was a child once more, and his the superior mind to which she looked for guidance.

"I was merely going to say that, amongst them all, I have found no one so thoroughly sound at heart as my brother Laurence."

"You certainly have not studied character for nothing," he returned, smiling, "since you have learned this subtle mode of flattery, so acceptable to poor human nature."

"Mr. Leroy, you are insincere; you know I would not say what I do not think to be true."

His brown cheek reddened. In speaking, she had bent towards him until one of the yellow curls with shades of brown rested on the arm of his chair, and floated over his hand. From an impulse sudden as irresistible, he captured the truant lock; and began slowly winding it about his finger. Gently but decisively, and with a look of annoyance on her face, she attempted to release it from his hold.

"Elder brothers," he said, with a perverse pleasure in thwarting her efforts, "are proverbially fond of tyrannizing over their younger sisters; I am just in the humor for such tyranny to-night; you must submit, for I am the stronger."

"Let me go, if you do not really wish to offend me," was only reply.

"Why do you give me the title of brother, and yet deny the commonest privileges of brotherly intimacy?" he as smoothing with his palm the shining rings of hair entwining finger. "Let us see if you can analyze your own motives as well as those of others."

A vivid flush rose to her brow.

"I wish you would always treat me exactly as though Elvira were present."

The words were not well out of her mouth before she repented having uttered them. He looked at her in seeming astonishment, and she became painfully embarrassed.

"But what would there be in Elvira's presence to prevent my winding one of your curls about my finger, if I were so disposed?"

"Nothing but the fear of giving her pain," was Ellen's confused and still more unfortunate reply.

"The fear of giving her pain," he repeated, in a meditative tone, as if weighing every word; "but why should it give her pain? you, who so love sincerity, answer me frankly."

"If I answered at all, it would be sincerely; but as it is your good will and pleasure to detain me against my wishes, I do not choose to answer your question: I too can be wilful."

"Just tell me this:—Why should Elvira care about one of your curls touching my hand?—the hand that drew you, poor half-drowned child that you were, from a cruel ocean that might have been your grave."

"I know it," she said, her eyes filling with tears; "I am afraid I have been very absurd about a trifle; but you shall know what you asked. I believe there *is* a love so lofty and ennobling that it thinks only of the happiness of its object—that it asks nothing for self, and is incapable of jealousy or any meaner passion; but there is a commoner kind that would keep the loved one wholly for, and to, itself; that would make its possessor sicken to see the loved hand wander, even in sportive carelessness, over the locks of another."

She ceased, with glowing cheeks and drooping, averted eyes.

"True," he said, unwinding and dropping from his finger the silken curl; "but how did you find this out? *you* who know passion but by name! Did it come to you in dreams? Let us know what your charming ideal is like, and whether you hope to meet its living counterpart amongst real, breathing men. If this is what you expect, believe me, you will go through life desolate and alone. Man is made of sterner stuff than lives in woman's dreams. The best and noblest are but human—bearing about the divine image disfigured by a thousand flaws; in vain will you seek for perfection."

"I shall seek for nothing," said Ellen, hastily; "let us talk of something else, please."

CHAPTER XI.

MERCANTILE EXPERIENCE AND INEXPERIENCE.

ELLEN, herself, gave the proposed change to their conversation by asking—

"When is the new store to be opened?"

"As soon as our stock of goods can be purchased and arranged."

He spoke in those tones of quiet kindness that had fallen so gratefully on her ear in the olden days when she had been (was she not so still?) dependent on his bounty for support. "After all," thought she, "I am more than half afraid that, instead of conducting myself with dignified propriety, I have been making a disgusting exhibition of prudishness, all about a mere harmless freedom from one who has reared me from childhood. Her face glowed again, as she asked herself what he must think of her having made such a great 'ado about nothing;' and then to think of her having presumed to talk to *him* of love and jealousy, about which he plainly thought she ought to have known nothing: it was all exquisitely absurd."

These thoughts flew so rapidly through her mind, that, almost as soon as he finished the reply to her question, she was ready to ask, in a subdued, self-distrustful tone:

"To whom does the 'our' you speak of, refer?"

"To my future partner, Mr. Chapley, and myself."

"Is Mr. Chapley a practical business man, or does he furnish capital as an equivalent to your knowledge of trade?" asked Ellen, archly; adding with a smile, "I hope you suitably appreciate the correct use I make of the mercantile terms I have picked up down stairs."

"You are an apt pupil," he said, giving her back smile for smile; "and as to my partner, he is much better *posted up* in business matters than I am, he having been book-keeper, for several years past, in a dry-goods house. As for capital, we are about on a par in that respect; or rather, we should be so, if his funds were available. I put a couple of thousand dollars into the concern, and he would furnish the same amount, but unluckily, just at present, his means are all tied up in a hundred shares of that 'Massahonet' copper stock, there was such a fever about last year. He paid fifteen dollars a share for it, in the first place; and assessments, laid on since, have raised the cost to twenty. I suppose it wouldn't bring half that amount, if sold at the broker's board to-morrow. He was very foolish to put all his eggs in one basket; he thinks so himself, now; 'twill be a good lesson to him for the future."

"I don't like copper stocks, at all," said Ellen, decidedly. "You buy in at twenty dollars a share, keep your stock a month, and sell out, perhaps at thirty dollars, perhaps at ten, as the price happens to have risen or declined. It is too much like risking the chances of a lottery."

"Of course, the value of everything in the market fluctuates, as the supply exceeds, or falls short of, the demand, or as money is easy or tight; but Mr. Chapley did not buy on speculation: he supposed himself to be making a safe investment of his earnings, and it may come all right in the end. The 'Massahonet' is a rich mine, and *must* succeed, if they only get the right men to manage it. To be sure, it costs enormously at the first start,

to get a mine in working operation; with all its engines, stamps, boarding-houses, plank-roads, and what-not; but when it once gets fairly under weigh, I can see no reason why the 'Massahonet' should not pay a good semi-annual dividend, and become as valuable a stock as any on the list. I advise Chapley to hold on to it, although I know we shall want the money it would bring, badly."

He took up a newspaper, and soon was absorbed in an account of doings at the brokers' board.

Together, Messrs. Chapley and Leroy visited the jobbing establishments at which they succeeded in buying the larger portion of the goods needed to adorn their own shelves. Buying for cash, the terms of purchase were easily agreed upon. I wish I could say that their purchases were judiciously made; but truth obliges me to confess that many of their goods were of last year's patterns, and some of them poor, even mean, in quality. Mr. Leroy trusted much to the advice given by men older in business experience than himself; and, as these same advisers were not over scrupulous, besides being anxious to dispose of unsaleable fabrics, the natural result followed in the inexperienced purchasers coming off second best in nearly every bargain. If remonstrated with on this unfairness, the sellers would have replied that, in the present sharply contested competition of rival firms in the same trade, the man who loves his neighbor as himself, would soon be starving for bread.

In due time the new store was opened. The funds of our partners ran low. Mr. Chapley attended the auction sales of dry-goods, bought a supply of silk and cotton fabrics on ninety days' credit; a satisfactorily endorsed note, as usual, being required. This requirement, by the way, being generally regarded as a mere form of words, whose strict fulfillment is not often demanded of firms in good repute. When, therefore, the note of *Chapley & Co.* was declined, through the auctioneer, unless a responsible endorser could be found, both partners were deeply wounded; and, in a moment of resentment, obtained a small discount on the bill of goods, and paid the balance in cash, greatly to their own inconvenience.

Mr. Chapley kept an admirably correct set of books, bu from this, his usefulness in the store fell short of Mr. Ler ticipations. A man of few words, stern and almost repel manner, the senior partner was far from making an accom salesman. His stiff and unbending formality was in striki trast with the ready courtesy of Mr. Leroy, who could fair customer in pulling over half the silks in the shop, an warded by the declaration that she had not come prep purchase, but merely desired to ascertain what was in th ket, without betraying so much as a look of annoyance. theless, he missed the bracing out-of-door, and in-door, to which he had been, for so many years, accustomed, mu than he could have believed possible; and not seldom can from the labors of the day, complaining of an unusual strange sensation of heaviness, in the head. On these oc he would sometimes throw himself upon the sofa, and fall slumber so profound, that Elvira found it impossible to him, in order that he might accompany her down to the c room, where his general intelligence and unassuming dig manner no longer lacked appreciation.

Mr. Trueburn, although somewhat confounded on firs ing of Mr. Leroy's change of employment, forebore all to the subject; and treated our quondam mechanic with guished kindness. For Ellen he also conceived a warm in and obtained from Mr. Leroy as much of her early histor latter chose to relate. She little knew that it was throu means of the *out-spoken* editor, that some of the best pe publications of the day found their way to the little tab the recess she usually occupied when in the room. She the glance of kindly interest that rested on her face, as, to the irreproachable taste of a Littell, she was enabled t the preëminent genius of England's master-spirits in scien literature.

With glowing cheeks, and heart beating high with p kindred and of country, did she pore over the charmed p the *Living Age*. But no less did a warm home-feeling c *fellowship* toward the gifted of her foster-land come over

she listened, with the mind's ear, (why not an *ear* as well as an eye?) to the discourse, sage and spicy, proceeding from editorial tables and easy chairs.

Mr. Rufflewell, who had long since tired of supplying Mrs. Leroy with sugary compliments in exchange for honeyed smiles, seemed not ill-disposed to win her husband's confidence; bestowing upon him the disinterested advice of one possessing a thorough acquaintance with business matters—advice which could hardly fail of being greatly to the benefit of his inexperienced listener. Thus, by slow and imperceptible degrees, Mr. Leroy learned to come to Mr. Rufflewell for counsel, in all the thousand and one perplexities which were ever ready to beset him in his new and untried career.

Through all this time, Ellen saw, with increasing uneasiness, that Mr. Leroy was still, week by week, growing ever paler and thinner. She even mentioned to Elvira her fears that his health was slowly but surely declining.

"Nonsense," was the reply, "there is nothing the matter with him, only he is getting off that horrid coat of tan he used to get on, working out of doors. I am sure I am delighted to see that he is growing more genteel-looking, more like a gentleman, every day of his life."

Ellen was silenced, but her fears were by no means allayed.

"My dear Laurence," cried Elvira to her husband, as he sat reading the evening paper in their own room.

He looked up in dismay at sound of this affectionate epithet, the certain herald of some disagreeable announcement.

"My dear Laurence," she repeated, to the utter discomfiture of her *lord* and *master*, "why can't we go to some other church than that old, high-pewed barn of a place that you stick to, so like wax? I never desire to sit under Mr. Elliot's preaching another day, so long as I live."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Leroy, as if it were with reluctance he spoke at all.

"Because his congregation are such an old-fashioned, humdrum set—the women mortal dowdies, and the men as old as Methusalah, and as homely as a hedge fence; not a dashy, good-

looking young fellow amongst them. There isn't a person there I'd give a straw to get acquainted with. I declare, I couldn't hear a word of the sermon last Sunday for looking at that old Becky Snewell, with her green silk bonnet lined with yellow—such taste, for a woman with a complexion like that of a boiled parsnip!—gloves a mile too big for her, a smelling-bottle about the size of a decanter, and a fan plaited up, out of a newspaper."

"If you had kept your eyes on the minister, you would not have seen all this," said Mr. Leroy, in a tone of grave reproach, quite thrown away on the object thereof.

"Kept my eyes on that old yarner! I shouldn't have been much better off, if I had. He is as odd a looking specimen as you'd see in a thousand; with his pinched-up face, his hooked nose, and his lanky arm beating the air in all directions, making me think of the down-left-right-up-beats the teacher used to keep us practicing at singing-school."

"Elvira, this is very disagreeable to me: respect for the message he bears should restrain you from heaping ridicule on this aged preacher of God's holy word. No one, but least of all no *woman*, should be found so hardened as to scoff at the religion which has done so much toward elevating her sex—or to deride its faithful teachers."

"I'm sure you make a great fuss because I don't happen to see the beauty of your lanthorn-jawed old parson: in my opinion, you might put it all in your eye and see clear. You told me, yourself, to look at him; and how am I to do that without seeing what manner of man he is?" was Elvira's perverse reply.

Mr. Leroy made no rejoinder, but threw himself back in his chair, looking pained and hurt rather than angry. From this venerable and revered preacher, of whom his wife spoke in such flippantly irreverent terms, how many lessons of heavenly wisdom had he not received! At his mother's dying bed-side, it was Mr. Elliot who had cheered and sustained her fainting spirit—as much as, in such an hour, mortal may cheer and sustain—pointing her onward ever to the golden gates of the city no

made with hands, as her frail life skiff was well-nigh overwhelmed by the heavy surgings of Jordan—breathing, in gentlest tone, divine messages of love and mercy, until his listener emerging from the shadow of darkness, brooding over the unseen river dividing earth from heaven, reached that blest land from which she will return nevermore.

But what of all this? The most tender and sacred associations were not of the slightest moment to Elvira; and her word was law, for had not the fiat of the physician gone forth, forbidding the denial of her lightest wish?

On the succeeding Sabbath, therefore, arrayed in silks and laces, her pretty head covered, I had very nearly said *filled*, with a charming pink hat (she had adroitly contrived to be caught out in a shower, and had thus been enabled to cast aside the old straw-bonnet thoroughly *hors de combat)*, Mrs. Leroy, with dainty, mincing tread, followed her husband up the broad aisle of the handsome church, presided over by the Rev. Theophilus Roselif. With a soft rustle of her full robes, she seats herself at the head of an elegantly cushioned pew; and looking about her with the air of a queen (that is, if queens ever *do* assume the airs of haughty self-complacency attributed to them, on which point I have my doubts), bowed with inimitable grace to Miss Bennett, who sat on the opposite side of the church. She was looking sweetly, in a white chip hat with marabouts, as she languidly fluttered the costly fan attached to her bracelet by a fine gold chain and a clasp of rubies.

The services commenced, and Elvira found much food for reflection, not in *them*, but in the showy apparel of the assembled *worshipers*. There was a lady in the pew directly front of them, who wore such a lovely mantilla! After examining it closely, Elvira felt almost sure that, with a few yards of Malta lace and some silk trimming, her own last year's visite might be made over into one almost as handsome. This was satisfactorily arranged, in her own mind, during the first half of the sermon: then there was plenty of time left for observing many other articles of dress, in which she was equally interested. She was much mortified, however, at being forced into the unwelcome

conclusion that her own bonnet was a thought too large, after all the orders she had given Miss Pinkney, not to let the front of it come within three inches of the top of her forehead. Stupid creature, that milliner, to insist that purple flowers were all the rage, when Elvira saw quite as many of other colors about her. The benediction was pronounced, and, in passing down the aisle, Mrs. Leroy was able to examine the texture of her neighbors' dresses more closely than she had hitherto succeeded in doing.

"Isn't it perfectly charming?" she asked of her husband, the moment they stepped upon the sidewalk.

"Isn't what charming?" he briefly returned.

"Why, coming to this splendid church, of course."

"I am a stranger, and do not feel at home here. What is there about the place that pleases you so much?"

"Why, everything; most of the people here are young and fashionable looking—I hope I shall get introduced to some of them in time—and Mr. Roselif looks so pale and interesting, and makes such graceful gestures, and uses such beautiful language, —flowery, Miss Bennett calls it—then the singing! I never heard anything like it. Mr. Rufflewell says it is almost equal to going to the Opera, to listen to it. Besides the stuffed pews are the most comfortable I ever sat in, and the frescoed walls are a pleasure to look at."

"What portions of the sermon did you think particularly well worth remembering?"

"Why, I didn't particularly notice that one part was better than another," said Elvira, hesitatingly; "and if I had done so, you couldn't expect me to learn it all by heart to repeat to you. At any rate, now that I have heard Mr. Roselif preach, I never *can* be contented to listen to another sermon from that slow-spoken, prosy old Mr. Elliot again, of that I am certain."

Knowing how utterly useless it was to combat her opinions by argument, her husband made no reply to this assertion, and they walked on in silence.

CHAPTER XII.

A THOROUGHLY WELL-BRED GENTLEMAN TAKES UNCEREMONIUS LEAVE OF FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES.

MESSRS. *Chapley & Leroy's* stock of goods was running low, and they began to look about them for a new supply. Mr. Ruffewell proposed selling them a bill of goods, for cash, at exceedingly low rates. Both partners were so well pleased with the prices, and the fine quality of every article offered them, that they bought a thousand dollars' worth of goods from the above mentioned gentleman; and, by a strenuous effort, succeeded in making immediate payment for the same.

Mr. Leroy remained late at the store, one evening, receiving the numerous cases and packages he had bargained for; and seeing that they were safely stowed away in a roughly boarded room, beneath the shop. He started for the store, early next morning, with the intention of marking down his old stock of goods, and having them so bestowed as to give the prominent places to a more fresh and desirable assortment. Judge of his surprise, on nearing his own store, at seeing a large wagon drawn up before the door, into which two strong men were lifting a case of the very silks he had so carefully packed away, on the previous evening.

"Take these goods out," cried Mr. Leroy, as soon as he was within speaking distance of the men, "and put them where you found them. You've made a mistake."

"No mistake at all, sir," one of them replied, in a surly tone; "we are acting under the orders of the gentleman inside."

In the haste with which he dashed the door, Mr. Leroy nearly ran against a tall, spare man, with a thin, sallow, but stern and determined face, which seemed not wholly unfamiliar to him.

"What does all this mean, sir?"

"It means," replied the stranger, with a look of firm resolve,

"that I have traced my goods to this store, and wherever I fi
my own property, there I will take it."

"My dear sir, you are laboring under some mistake: these
my goods; I bought them, and paid for them."

"Who did you buy them of?"

"Of Mr. Rufflewell."

"I thought so! and for how much?"

"One thousand dollars."

"And they are richly worth fifteen hundred; but that, I p
sume, you know as well as I do. Mr. Leroy, you are a yo
man, at least in this sort of practice, and you will find that
have got no boy to deal with. It will take more than you
Mr. Rufflewell, sharp as he thinks himself, to outwit *me*."
spoke in a tone of extreme exasperation.

"I do not comprehend you in the least; please explain y
self," said Mr. Leroy, drawing himself up with a look of wou
ed dignity.

"You act your part admirably," said Mr. Avondale, wit
sneer, (he had but just been recognized by Mr. Leroy); "
it will not avail you, with one who knows you bought t
goods for two-thirds of their real value. You can pretend, if
choose, that you was not cognizant of the fact of Mr. Rufflew
having exchanged those splendid Morgan horses he has drive
long, together with phæton and harnesses, for these very g
I now claim. The scoundrel! to give me a bill of sale for w
belonged to his stable-keeper, and had never been his own.
for you, young man, it is a pity you have got into bad comp
The affectation of virtuous innocence is easily put on; but it
not deceive me. You boarded in the same house with that smo
tongued villain, and so have had the best of chances to con
your plans for swindling honest men. If I can prove that t
has been a collusion between you to cheat—that you are
knowing receiver of the goods he stole, yes *stole!* you may
as black as midnight, but that won't frighten me out of u
the right word to express what I mean—if I can prove thi
say, the law will put you where you deserve to be put. In
meantime I've got my goods and I'll keep them. If you h

really paid for them, I advise you to look to Mr. Rufflewell for a return."

"Mr. Rufflewell, alone, is responsible for any line of conduct he may have thought proper to pursue. These goods are ours, by honorable purchase, and I forbid your removing them. You are the first man, Mr. Avondale, who ever *dared* accuse me of dishonesty; do not repeat your words, or I may be driven to forget myself and the respect due your years."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Avondale, scornfully, and with a cutting sneer on his lips; "Strong words to come off a weak stomach! but I've heard bullying bluster before, and do not tremble at it."

"Leave my store, this instant, or I will put you out of it," cried Mr. Leroy, springing toward the last speaker with the sudden impulse of fiery indignation.

Mr. Avondale waited but for a single glance at Mr. Leroy, whose burning eyes flashing from beneath sternly knitted brows, showed how thoroughly his spirit was roused within him, before making a precipitate retreat.

The heavy flush on Mr. Leroy's face gave place to a deadly paleness, his over-strained muscles relaxed, and he sat down on a stool, feeling himself weak as a child. He never remembered to have been so excited by passion before; but never till now had his good name been assailed, and his reputation was as dear to him as life. The boy who had come down early to sweep out the store, cast furtive glances at his employer, while dusting stools and counters.

After a few moments thought, Mr. Leroy left the store with a look of determination on his face; and walked rapidly down the street.

"Where is Mr. Rufflewell?" was his first enquiry of a servant, on reaching Laramont's.

"He isn't down stairs yet; he must have staid out late last night, leastwise none of us knew when he came in," was the not very encouraging reply.

"Go up and say to Mr. Rufflewell that Mr. Leroy desires to

see him, instantly, on important business; stop, I will go alon with you."

Rappings, and, finally, thumpings, on the door of the room were of no avail in rousing its inmate, if inmate it had.

Laramont was appealed to on the subject, and could not remember having seen Mr. Rufflewell since the dinner hour of the previous day; and suggested the probability of sudden illness as the cause of his non-appearance. How was the truth of this suggestion to be tested? The door was locked inside, and the chambermaid could not find the duplicate key, formerly in her possession.

Mr. Chapley, finding affairs all gone wrong at the store, had come in search of his partner, for explanations; and was thus added to the number of those in anxious and perplexed consultation.

After considerable delay the lock was picked, and an entrance into the room effected. The bed was untumbled, and the unfastened trunks, on being opened, displayed a miscellaneous assortment of wearing apparel.

"It looks like a midnight flitting," said Laramont; "only Mr. Rufflewell is such a *perfect gentleman* one wouldn't like to believe any ill of him. It was only yesterday," he added ruefully, "that he borrowed five hundred dollars of me, to say nothing of a three months' board bill, just due."

Mr. Leroy rapidly recounted to his partner all that had passed between himself and Mr. Avondale, at the store, in the morning.

"I will go to him at once," returned Mr. Chapley; "he may be able to tell us something of Mr. Rufflewell's whereabouts; and you had better go back to the store, as one of us ought to be there."

Thus it was arranged. It was ten o'clock before Mr. Chapley rejoined his anxiously expectant partner, at the store.

"What luck?" was Mr. Leroy's first question.

"I found Mr. Avondale, and he was waspish enough, to which proves that he is doubtful of his own case."

"Then you have no fear of our losing the cost of the goods

"No; I ran in to see a lawyer, as I was coming back, and he advised me to sue the concern for the amount the goods cost us, this very day; I believe it is the best move we can make One remark of Mr. Avondale took me entirely by surprise—it was that he was glad I had come to him, instead of my partner, who was so hot-tempered that he would hardly listen to the full merits of the case."

"He insulted me, and I came very near knocking him down," was the cool rejoinder of the junior partner.

"You!" exclaimed Mr. Chapley, incredulous astonishment portrayed on every feature—"you, who are a pattern of patience and forbearance, to clerks and customers; why, Leroy, I didn't think it was in you to strike a man."

"If you had ventured to call me a cheat or a swindler, I am sorry to say you might have found out to the contrary; under intentional insult, I am not quite sure of my temper—but that is nothing to the question—what about Mr. Rufflewell?"

"I suppose he is on his way to California."

"To California! why do you think so?"

"I will tell you all I know about it. Mr. Avondale has ascertained that he started for New York in last night's train, and thinks it more than probable that he leaves for Chagres in today's steamer. Expeditious, isn't he? It is only three days since he bought of Mr. Avondale the goods we thought we were getting at such a bargain: I only wish you hadn't let them go out of the store."

"I couldn't help myself," said Mr. Leroy.

"I suppose not; but we should have made something handsome out of them if we had succeeded in keeping them. Mr. Rufflewell agreed to pay down five hundred, cash, for them (Mr. Avondale promising to wait a few days for his money, just to oblige his customer), and, for the thousand dollar balance, he was to give up the horses and phæton he has driven so long. See how artfully he arranged his plans:—pretending to be very loath to part with such valuable animals, he concluded to reserve the right of retaining them in his possession until the first of

next month; when, according to agreement, he was either to deliver up the bays, or pay one thousand down and have the privilege of keeping them."

"Then, if Mr. Avondale is to have the horses and carriage, which I should judge to be worth a thousand, what possible claim can he have on *all* our goods!" interposed Mr. Leroy.

"Just let me finish my story, and you will see. It was only by luck and chance that Mr. Avondale, happening, yesterday afternoon, to be going by the livery stable where they are kept, thought he would run in and take a peep at the horses, to see how they looked in their stalls, as he had only seen them on the road. Mentioning to the stable-keeper that he had bought them, conditionally, and hoped in the course of a month to become their owner; he was told that the only claim Mr. Rufflewell had on them rose from the fact of his having hired them by the season for a couple of years. Of course, Mr. Avondale took a bee-line for Rufflewell's store; and there learned that he had sold out his interest in the concern to his junior partner and a former clerk, and had started for New York. Knowing that the California steamer goes out to-day, he made up his mind at once that Rufflewell meant to take passage in her. He mentioned what he surmised to the new partners, and they became so much confused and denied so positively all knowledge of Rufflewell's movements—it would injure their credit, you see, if it was supposed they had connived at his plans—that he was almost sure his conjecture was right. He has telegraped on to the New York police to be on the lookout for Mr. Rufflewell's arrival. That is all that he can do, as the steamer would be gone before he could reach the city himself.

"He traced the goods to our store last night, but too late to get possession of them. I think he missed a figure in his calculation, when he concluded to take them at all risks; as he will be likely to find out before we get through with him. We may have to go through a tedious law-suit, though, and what we are to do for our stock of fall goods, while it is pending, is more than I know."

It was not with any very cheering anticipations for the future that the speakers separated, and went each about his accustomed duties.

"Hurrah! here's news for you," cried Laramont, dashing into the store a little past the middle of the afternoon; and as suddenly stopping short, and raising his hat in deference to several lady customers at the counter. "I am bound for New York," he continued, rapidly, but in a lower tone, to the two partners, whom he had hastily beckoned aside; "and I want Leroy to go with me; I'll pay all expenses—will nab the artful dodger yet—can't stop to explain—telegraphic dispatch to Avondale from chief of police, or somebody of that cloth—can't find Rufflewell—raining cats and dogs, blowing great guns on there—steamer can't get away—will you go? yes or no? can't wait an instant—late for cars."

With this rapid enunciation of his plans, Laramont bolted out of the store as precipitately as he had bolted into it. Deciding on the instant, Mr. Leroy followed; and quickly overtaking him, they ran up the street together, and stopped an empty hack at the corner, Laramont calling out as they leaped inside:

"Providence depot—quick; we are late."

Away they rattled over the pavements at as rapid a pace as a decent regard for the safety of numerous pedestrians would permit. On turning from Winter into Tremont street, Laramont, after drawing out his watch, with a look of impatience, thrust his head from the coach-window, and cried out:

"Put on the string, driver—a double fare if you get us to the depot in time for the next outward train—starts in just one minute and a half."

The words were barely out of his mouth, when the lash of the coachman's whip came in disagreeable proximity with his face.

"Take care, there! you came within an inch of snapping the end o' my nose off," he cried, with a backward recoil.

At the lower end of Boylston street, their progress was effectually stopped by a crowd of vehicles.

"I can't stand this," cried Laramont, impatiently; "I hear

the puff, puffing of the engine, already; and we shall certainl be left, at this rate."

Letting down the window, he succeeded in opening the doo and sprang from the coach, followed by Mr. Leroy; tossing th driver his fare, they started upon a full run for the depot; a when they sprang down its steps, had the mortification of seei the train slowly rolling along the rails at the farther end of th building.

For a moment Laramont looked discouraged, then shouti out:

"Never say die—can't stop for tickets;" he dashed down t platform, reaching its termination just in season to spring up the steps of the last passenger-car, followed so closely by M Leroy, that the latter jumped full against him, pitching h headlong against a stout man outside the door-way; while innocent cause of this mishap had very nearly been thrown b upon the track; and, as it was, lost his hat, which was crush beneath the wheels of the baggage car.

"Lucky your head wasn't inside it," said the stout man in door-way, with acerbity; adding some remarks, neither chari ble nor complimentary, on the heinous carelessness of bela passengers; while the object of these strictures, panting, flush and heated, seated himself, with uncovered head, in the c For a moment he was the observed of all observers, not at all the increase of his own comfort. Almost the first countena on which his eyes rested, was that of Mr. Avondale, whom recognized by a frigid bow. Nothing daunted by the cooln of this recognition, Mr. Avondale courteously saluted our qu dam mechanic; and drawing a cloth cap from his carpet-b presented it to the bare-headed traveler.

"Thank you," he said, with a stiffness of manner he str vainly to overcome, "I shall not need a hat before reach New York, where I can easily provide myself with one." could not submit, so he said to himself, to receive a favor fr one who had openly cast doubts on his integrity.

"Pooh, pooh, don't quarrel with your own bread and butt

'emonstrated Laramont; "it may be very spirited and
dent and all that; but it don't add to a person's comfort
ng run."
cap is of no use to me, as I am not disposed for sleep
; and so my offer does not call for thanks," carelessly
d Mr. Avondale.
ont took the cap, and placing it on his own head, de-
an exceedingly comfortable article in which to indulge
; for which he asserted himself to be not ill-disposed;
led his own glossy beaver to Mr. Leroy, with a gesture
g the possibility of its refusal; adding, as a final

shall have something else to do, in New York, than
ng hat-stores."
they reached the city, they found that, although it was
ing, the wind had somewhat lulled; and it was with
rs of having come on a bootless errand, that our trio,
mpanied by a constable, slowly made their way in a
ugh the noisy and crowded thoroughfare of America's
metropolis. With exultation, they found the California
still at the pier. While Mr. Laramont and Mr. Leroy
d glances of pleasure at the sight, Mr. Avondale openly
his gratification to the constable, sitting opposite him;
ated his request that a most rigid search of the vessel
e made.
king known the object of their visit to the captain of
ner, this gentlemanly commander, although denying that
s any passenger on board answering to their description
Rufflewell's person, courteously accorded them every
n his power for prosecuting the proposed search.
full hour, then, did our self-constituted committee of
y into every possible and impossible place of conceal-
o which a man might, or might not, have been able to
himself, without obtaining so much as a trace of the
their search. Baggage, freight, and even the cook's
ad been overhauled; and all with fruitless toil. To
ssurance doubly sure," Laramont, espying a small vacant

space in a coal-bunker, scrambled in, neck and heels, but soon wriggled himself out again, declaring that he was perfectly satisfied—with a smutted face and soiled clothing, of course, as his exertions won him no other reward. Not until the last warning bell gave notice to all but passengers to leave the vessel, did our baffled pursuers quit their post. Not a person came on board, to the latest minute of their stay, whose face and figure they did not closely scan.

"Well," said Mr. Avondale, stepping upon the pier with a long-drawn breath, "it is a comfort to know that, in this steamer at least, he has not gone to California: we can search for him in other directions, at our leisure, now we are sure of that."

All four remained watching the stately craft, as, "like a thing of life," she walked the waters, slowly receding from their view. Had the starboard side of the vessel but been visible where they stood, they might have seen a man, coarsely clad and apparently past life's prime, creeping out of the wheel-house (thanks to a broken slat in its outward side, he had effected an easy entrance therein), and making his way along the guards. Who would believe, in opposition to his own senses, that this miserable-looking being, wet to the skin, pale with apprehension, his eyes smarting and half-blinded by the showers of briny spray with which the envious buckets, at the first revolution of the huge wheel, had plenteously deluged him, in his dreary skulking-place, could be the refined and elegant Mr. Rufflewell—the pet of society—the object of affectionate solicitude to fashionable mammas with marriageable daughters—the ever welcome guest at drawing-rooms the most select and exclusive, whose silver-knobbed, brocatelle-draped doors are inexorably closed against virtue in homely array; against goodness, if lacking in good-breeding; against coarseness, ill-manners, and vice—if not deftly polished and richly gilded! Yet such was the fact.

Shaking himself as nearly dry as, under the circumstances was possible; our successful man of business, having first wrung out his cap and drawn it down over his eyes, as well as pulled his coat-collar up about his face, skulked off, with many a *precaution* for avoiding observation, to his own state-room.

Once there, with the door safely locked behind him, he removes a long, flowing beard, together with a wig, both iron-grey in color. He next proceeds to exchange his coarse, ill-fitting garments for clothing of the finest quality, cut in the latest style.

A triumphant smile curls his hitherto compressed lips, as he tears from his valise the card whereon is inscribed the plebeian name of Silas Brown, and carefully deposits it in his wallet. He breathes more freely, now that he is once more able to assume the garb and bearing of a gentleman. How daintily he inserts that diamond pin in his snowy shirt-frill, and fastens his wristbands with those handsome garnet studs! then takes, in his white and slender fingers, a richly mounted lorgnette, and bestows it in a side-pocket.

With what a quiet air of conscious superiority he promenades the saloon, pacing from end to end of which, he seems utterly regardless of the many admiring glances and flattering remarks elicited by his handsome person, expensively tasteful attire, and air of well-bred ease and assurance—impudence it would have been yclept, in one less skilled in fraud. Even had these admiring gazers been aware of all the morning's transactions, it is doubtful if many of them would have less eagerly sought the acquaintance of one who had so skillfully baffled his pursuers—one whose *shrewdness* had won him a golden reward, and who was, besides, in all externals, so thoroughly well-bred a gentleman.

As Mr. Rufflewell has no further connection with our story, it may not be amiss to remark here, that, in a letter sent home to a friend several years after his safe arrival at California, he speaks of himself as one of the "O. F. M.'s" of the new El Dorado; and seems sanguine in the hope of realizing, at no distant day, the two dearest objects of his ambition—the first to become a millionaire, and, secondly, governor of the new commonwealth.

Borrowing the spectacles of Imagination, let us glance down the vista of coming years, and survey our modern Dives, robed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. Behold, how scheming fathers point him out to their hopeful suc-

cessors, as a great and notable example of perseverance crown with distinguishing success—an example worthy the closest st and imitation.

"He began a poor boy," hear them cry, "and now look his superb villa, with its paintings and statuary; his magnifi grounds, with their groves and fountains; and all, the fruits his own superior business capacity. Ah, my son! might I h see you occupying his eminent social and political position, would be the proudest and happiest day of my life that gl dened my eyes with such a sight. But I am afraid you haven his shrewdness; they say that not only his money, but his va notes and acceptances are all loaned out on good security, at tw per cent a month."

Stand aside, reader, make way, for the richly appointed eq page comes grandly rolling down the street. Many a head bared in token of reverence for the man whom the world deligh eth to honor. With what a stately air of condescension H Excellency bows his haughty head to the "unwashed multitude the hard-fisted, brawny-chested sons of honest toil, bespatter by mud from the great man's carriage-wheels.

Of a verity, the end is not yet. A few more risings and se tings of the sun, and the day cometh in the which Lazarus, t God-fearing beggar, shall take his place above those kings a princes of this world whose robes have been kept less pure a spotless than his from Earth's defilements.

CHAPTER XIII.

SICK AT HEART AND SICK AT HEAD.—CHARITY.

As soon as Mr. Leroy reached the store, on his return fr New York, Mr. Chapley took him aside to enquire into the s cess of his undertaking.

"We couldn't find so much as a trace of Mr. Rufflewell," w the reply which the reader has already anticipated.

"Too bad!" said the senior partner, with a gesture of impatience; "everything works against us; here is trade unusually brisk, and our new clerk turns out to be a capital salesman, (worked off that whole pile of cashmere shawls yesterday,) but we can't make these things work to our advantage, because we have nothing decent, in the way of fall goods, to sell. Can't we patch up the difficulty with Avondale, some way or other? I'd be willing to allow him a hundred dollars extra, for the goods he lugged off from here, rather than have our store so miserably furnished, just now; why, we shall lose all our best customers, if we don't offer them a better assortment than we have, at present."

"I can't help it, if we do," replied Mr. Leroy, with the calmness almost of desperation. He was nearly exhausted with anxiety and weariness, having scarcely closed his eyes in sleep for the last two nights. "We need hope for no favors from Avondale," he added gloomily; "he went on in the same train with us, and was very civil and polite all the way on; but when we made up our minds that it was of no use trying to find Mr. Ruffiewell, he seemed to feel angry with everybody; and said 'if the law decided that we were entitled to the one thousand, cash, the goods actually cost us, he would pay it, and not without.' So, it seems that, with all the rest, we are to be saddled with, there is no knowing how long, a law-suit; I'm sick as death of the whole affair. I don't know anything about law, and I don't want to. My head aches, ready to split, and I'm going home to bed."

"Wait a minute; I've been in as bad a kettle of fish as you, while you've been gone; I never was more worked up in my life. I won't be a minute telling you all about it."

Mr. Leroy made a deprecatory gesture. "Not now, Chapley, your news will keep till to-morrow; I've got load enough on my mind for one day."

"Hold on a bit," persisted the senior partner; "you haven't forgotten that note of ours that comes due to-morrow; well, as I thought there was no use in hanging on to my copper stock any longer, I made up my mind that now was the time to sell out,

and raise the money to meet that little demand. Not two hours after I had ordered a broker to dispose of my hundred shares at the highest market price, I received a notification, which I ought to have gotten a month ago, of a new assessment of five dollars a share, already over-due. Interesting, wasn't it? The Massahonet sold at the *board* to-day, for four dollars and five-eighths a share; so, when I have paid the broker his commission for selling, I shall lose twenty-five cents a share, besides the two thousand I first invested. I can't understand it; either there has been gross mismanagement somewhere, or it costs an outrageous sum to get a new mine into such working order that it can support itself, and pay a fair dividend to its stockholders. It may do very well for the knowing ones, or for capitalists who can afford to wait years for a return, to invest in coppers; but if ever I get a couple of thousands scraped together again, I'll be precious sure to put it where I can find it when wanted. Here's a pretty end to the capital I was going to furnish the concern; hadn't you better buy me out—it won't cost much, the horn inkstand and sand-box constituting my effects—and engage me as book-keeper?"

"I'm not sure it wouldn't be for your interest if I should do so; that is, if you were sure of receiving your salary," replied Mr. Leroy, with dreary humor, as he finally effected his escape from the store; or, to borrow the refined phraseology of the new salesman, "made tracts for his tying-up place."

Thoroughly wearied out was he, on reaching Laramont's. He met several richly dressed ladies in ascending the stairs; and their light, careless laughter smote painfully on his disattuned ear. "Ah!" he sighed to himself, "if it were only a quiet home, instead of this gay boarding-house, to which I was coming back."

He entered his own sitting-room, and the air of luxurious comfort pervading the apartment, contrasting, as it did, with his own worn condition of body and mind, struck him with a painful sense of incongruity; it seemed no fit resting-place for a tired and way-worn traveler; everything was too fine for use.

His wife, daintily attired in a pale violet silk with falls of soft lace at the shoulders, was gracefully reclining on the purple vel-

vet lounge, which seemed in perfect keeping with herself. She did not rise to greet him; it was Ellen, who, laying aside her needle-work, came forward with a welcoming smile; and hastened, as far as lay in her power, to make him comfortable.

"Dear me," said Elvira, in a pettish tone of injury; "so you've got a-long at last. I should have liked to go on to New York with you, if you would only have let me known you were going. I never was out of Massachusetts in my life; and I guess there is not another person at Laramont's who could say the same; I'm really ashamed to let people know how little I've been about the world. Do, Ellen, take that coat off the easy-chair. You mus'n't throw your dirty things over my furniture, Laurence; they will soil it."

His pale face flushed; and Ellen avoided looking at him as, very gently and without speaking, she removed the offending garment.

"It was so unlike you, starting off in the way you did!" continued Elvira, in a fault-finding tone. "I might have been worried to death about you, as it was nearly ten o'clock at night, before Mr. Chapley got here, to tell us why and where you had gone. It all happened well enough, as it turned out, for I happened to be out the whole evening with Miss Bennett; but no thanks to you that I wasn't worried out of my senses about you, when the doctor said I must be so careful to avoid all unpleasant excitement, too! it is astonishing what inconsiderate creatures you men are; you have such iron nerves, you can't understand what little things wear upon a delicate constitution. But you haven't told us yet whether you succeeded in finding Mr. Rufflewell."

"Not a trace of him," was the brief and cold reply.

"Ah, I thought he would be too sharp for you, when Mr. Chapley told me how matters stood between you and him. He is a remarkably smart man in business, so I've heard it said. I suppose you won't be able, then, to get either the money, or the goods you've paid for, at present."

"I suppose not," he replied, sighing unconsciously; there was

an aching void in his heart which her words, thus far, had certainly done nothing towards filling.

"Oh, how ridiculous!" exclaimed Elvira, "that you should be so pinched for money, when I'm really suffering for so many things: you've come back feeling poorer than ever, haven't you?"

"Poorer than ever," he repeated, in the gloomiest of accents.

"How abominably provoking! when I had set my heart upon having a splendid new silk, primrose ground with red polka spots, to wear to the party we are invited to, next week, at Mr. Melville's sister's, in Mount Vernon street. Strange, that everybody but you can support their families in decent style. Well, this world is full of disappointments; and instead of a new silk, I must have a basque fitted to my old brocade skirt, for I should look like a fright wearing muslin, in my situation.

"Don't say anything to Adelphine, either of you, about Mr. Rufflewell's running away, for he is her cousin, you know; and she is going to lend me the sweetest head-dress, ornamented with fuschias in cornelian and emerald buds, to wear to the party. I may as well go and tell her now that she had better buy her dress at once, for I can't have one like it, as we had agreed."

Mr. Leroy making no objection to this proposal, with a highly injured air, his wife deliberately rose and left the room. Ellen felt that, under the circumstances, Elvira's words had been ill timed and cruel, and determined, so far as lay in her power, to make up for the other's lack of kindness.

"I am more sorry than I can tell you, for all this weight of care and trouble that has come upon you," she said, softly, her eyes full of tears, as she stood beside his chair.

"Thank you; you are very good," he said, simply, but in a tone of deep feeling. Adding, "we are miserably short-sighted beings, the best of us."

Ellen, failing to see the appositeness of this remark, and intent only upon ministering to his comfort, suggested the probability of his having come home tired and hungry.

To both charges he pleaded "guilty;" and, contrary to a

ecedent, she made her way to the kitchen, where, with her ost persuasive smile, she succeeded in coaxing a cross cook into ood humor, and obtaining consent to toast Mr. Leroy's bread, nd make his tea exactly as he liked it. A pleasant-faced chamermaid, won by Ellen's conciliatory manners, volunteered to arry the tea-tray up to Mr. Leroy's parlor; feeling amply rewarded by the kindly look and word of thanks with which this little service was accepted.

Ellen found Mr. Leroy asleep in his chair; and it required considerable effort, on her part, to awaken him, and induce him to partake of the food she had been at such trouble to prepare. He was thoroughly worn out with anxiety and want of rest.

"Does your head ache?" asked Ellen, as she noticed his swollen eyes and the distended veins on his forehead.

"Excruciatingly," he replied, pressing his temples between his palms.

"Shall I bathe it, as I used to do?"

"If you will."

He closed his eyes, with a faint smile of relief, as her cool hand laved his burning brow with Cologne-water.

"It does really seem to me," said Elvira, returning with a more pleasant face than she had worn on leaving the room, "that Ellen was cut out for a nurse. It was only this morning that she worked over Miss Bennett's head, bathing her temples in spirits of vinegar, till I should have thought she would have been ready to drop. It would tire me to death, to be on my feet so long. Somehow, everybody likes to have Ellen about them when they don't feel well; I'd rather they took a fancy to my society at any other time."

"Don't you see? he is fast asleep," whispered Ellen, softly returning to her seat and resuming her needle-work.

* * * * * *

The abrupt departure of Mr. Rufflewell was very little talked about, by his former fellow-boarders, excepting in their own private apartments. At table, and in the drawing-room, Laramont strenuously discountenanced all allusion to the subject. Indignant as he had at first been, in regard to his own losses,

when he found they were irremediable, policy forbade his risking the chance of giving lasting offence to such liberal patrons as the Bennetts, by openly canvassing the merits, or rather demerits, of their near relative.

It was several days after Mr. Leroy's return from New York, that a handsome private carriage drew up in front of his store; and a young lady, curled, perfumed, bejewelled, and flounced to the waist, alighted therefrom; and entering the shop, inquired for himself. He came forward, bowing politely, recollecting the face of the new comer, but quite unable to call her name to mind.

With well-bred ease she introduced herself:

"Miss Steptoe—Mr. Leroy."

He expressed himself as happy to make her acquaintance, and at her service, if she would be pleased to look at any of the dress-goods they had to offer.

"Thank you; I did not come with the intention of making any purchases this morning, but on a little matter of business," she replied, in the lightest and airiest manner; "I believe you are at present one of Mr. Roselif's congregation?"

He bowed.

She resumed: "He is about commencing house-keeping, having always boarded until now, and we thought, at first, of giving him a little help in the form of a donation party; but finally decided, as Mrs. Roselif is an extremely delicate little creature, to bestow the donations, without the infliction of the party."

"Is Mrs. Roselif an invalid?" asked Mr. Leroy, feeling called upon to say something.

"Ah, no; at least, I never heard of her having any confirmed disease; but she is languid, extremely so, and, in constitution, far from robust."

"I believe I have never had the pleasure of seeing her," said Mr. Leroy, still feeling the necessity of keeping up a conversation, tending, he scarcely knew whither.

"I dare say not, as she goes out but seldom, at this time of year. Reared at the 'sunny South,' she can hardly endure our chill, bleak winds."

"Perhaps they are the very thing she needs to brace her constitution into strength, if she would but dress herself suitably for the climate, and"——

"Very true; but, in her father's family, she was always accustomed to the attendance of numerous servants, and is wholly unused to active exercise. Brought up as she has been, it would be absurd to expect her to undergo the hardships of many of our overworked women, with their miserable help, and large families: She is indisposed to the exertion of walking; and, you know, for those who do not keep their own carriage, or even for those who do (glancing complacently at her own elegant equipage), a daily drive is quite an expensive luxury. It is in order to give him the means of commanding some such enjoyments, that we propose furnishing his house throughout, and thus leave his salary for the supply of other wants."

"What is the amount of his yearly salary?"

"Two thousand dollars."

"Mr. Roselif's is a wealthy society; if that sum is not sufficient to supply his reasonable wants, and enable him to make some provision for the future, it should certainly be increased."

"I think so, too; but that is a matter for you gentlemen to decide. In the meantime, I have been appointed, by the ladies, as one of a committee for ascertaining what particular thing each member of the congregation may feel disposed to contribute, so as to prevent numbers of the same article being sent in."

She drew forth some exquisite little tablets, bound in pearl covers clasped with silver, and opening the same, carelessly read aloud from the list of names inscribed therein: "Mrs. Avondale—a tête-à-tête, French damask and rosewood. Miss Laura—side-table, papier mache with gilded pedestal. Miss Pettigrew—half a dozen chairs, black walnut, upholstered in brocatelle."

"If I might advise about your donation, Mr. Leroy, I should say, let it be a piece of linen sheeting or something of that sort with whatever else you may choose to add to the gift." Looking up quickly, as he made no reply, and perceiving that her proposal had impressed him less favorably than she could have de-

sired, she added hastily, "I would not by any means presume dictate as to *what* you should give; of course, you are the be judge on that point; but I cannot doubt, after seeing your ov charmingly furnished parlor, (I did myself the honor of callii on your good lady this morning,) that you will gladly do yo part towards supplying him who ministers to us in spiritual thing with similar tasteful surroundings."

He was just in the slightest degree embarrassed, at this artl and labored appeal. "Really, you have called on me at a mc unfortunate time—"

"The smallest favors gratefully received," playfully interpos Miss Steptoe; and once more she read aloud from her list names: "Miss Deborah Grizzell—half a dozen pair of laml wool hose."

"Miss Grizzell, my old washer-woman!" exclaimed Mr. I roy; "I hope she is well and comfortable."

"Well, just at present, she has the rheumatism so that she c only crawl about the room; she says it is only a cold and does seem at all worried about *herself*, though she had a great deal say about a poor widow woman in the same house, with so sick children, with scarcely anything to eat, drink, or wear."

"Did you go in to see them?"

"I hadn't time to-day; I have a round of calls to get throu with, before dinner; besides, she doesn't belong to our socie (I found that out from Miss Grizzell,) and our pastor is our pecial charge. What shall I put down against your name, sir

"Not anything; the disordered state of my own affairs, ji now, will not warrant any display of generosity on my part."

Ah! Mr. Leroy, why will you risk the chance of injuring yo own credit by this frank avowal of business perplexities? Wh but that long-formed habits of open and manly candor will n be bound by the galling fetters of worldly policy?

Miss Steptoe returned her gold pencil to her reticule with look of blank surprise, not unmingled with disappointment.

"Really, I am afraid they will think me but a poor collector everybody was expected to give *something*. Charity, as we a *know*, is one of the cardinal virtues."

"I agree with you *there*, Miss Steptoe, but I can hardly view it in the light of a charity—my sending a gift to one whose income, for this year at least, I am afraid will be far greater than my own."

Miss Steptoe shut down the cover of her reticule, fastening the same with a spiteful little snap.

"I need not detain you longer," she said in words; in look, "I need not have come at all."

"What did you subscribe for Mr. Roselif's new house?" was Elvira's first question of her husband, as he came in to his one o'clock dinner.

"Not the first thing; I am in no situation to make presents to anybody, as you very well know."

"O, Laurence, how shameful! I hope you didn't go and say that to Miss Steptoe, in your blunt fashion."

"That was just what I did say to her, and nothing else, for it was the truth."

"O dear me! I might have known better than to have sent her to you; and I wouldn't have done so, if I had only had a decently well-filled purse about me, as other ladies have. I sha'n't be thought anything of if I don't do as others do; and everybody, rich and poor, gives to the minister. We shall be called mean and stingy, and I shouldn't wonder if Miss Steptoe cut my acquaintance, and Miss Bennett too, as to that matter."

"I suppose you could manage to live without them," was Mr. Leroy's rather ungracious rejoinder.

"Don't be a dolt," was the tender adjuration of his amiable spouse. "Only think," she went on, "Adelphine gave a handsome gilt tea-set, she told me so; and poor old Stubbins, the shoemaker, gave a pair of boots and another of slippers, though his own boys go bare-foot to school,—he blows the organ, you know, at our church—while you, with your handsome store on Washington Street, give nothing. What *will* people think of us?"

"When will you learn, Elvira, to do what is right, in itself considered, and let the opinions of others go for what they are worth? The approval of our own consciences is, or ought to be,

of more value than the applause of a multitude," said Mr. Leroy with lofty philosophy, and, it must be confessed no little acrimony of voice and manner; for the irritating processes to which his wife so often subjected him were beginning, slowly but surely, to tell upon a temper which had hitherto, with rare exceptions, been held in admirable control.

She was silent, not because she was convinced that he was right, but to give herself time to discuss, in her own mind, the feasibility of a new plan that had presented itself. This was no other than the sending to Mrs. Roselif one of the satin covered arm-chairs which had so long occupied posts of honor in her own parlor. Decidedly, so she argued, she had a right to dispose of what was her own, through the gift of her father, without so much as consulting her husband. So, at no very distant day, Mrs. Roselif displayed her usual graceful languor in the violet satin arm-chair, she had graciously accepted; and thus saved the Leroys from that dire fall in the good opinion of the Roselif congregation, which Elvira had apprehended with so much dread. But I anticipate.

"Did she, Miss Steptoe I mean, mention a poor family in extremely destitute circumstances, living in the same house with our old washerwoman?" asked Mr. Leroy, as the circumstance recurred to his memory.

Elvira shook her head. "I am sure Miss Steptoe received great encouragement to mention any object of charity to *us*," she said, sarcastically.

"Providing a poor family with the necessaries of life is a very different matter from making elegant and expensive presents, where they are not actually needed," he rejoined gloomily.

Elvira was in an ill-humor, and did not choose to keep up the conversation.

"Poor old Miss Grizzell! we have none of us been near her for a long time," he said, with a glance at Ellen, who had at that instant entered the room.

"She lives so far away from us," said Ellen, "that I have not lately found time for so long a walk; but I will go and see how *she is getting* along, this very afternoon, if you wish me to."

"My basque!" exclaimed Elvira; "how can you forget that? and the party coming off to-night."

"I have put the last stitch in the basque, and sewed the lace on your gloves, and the flowers in your sleeves," returned Ellen, composedly.

"Inquire of Miss Grizzell about a poor widow woman and her sick children, living in the same house, will you?" asked Mr. Leroy.

Ellen readily promised compliance with this request, and, as soon as dinner was over, started on her mission of kindness. When she was half-way down stairs, Elvira called her back, to say to her that, in prospect of the fatigues of the evening, she was going to lie down for a nap; and desired Ellen, if she found the door locked on her return, to go down to the drawing-room for awhile, and thus avoid disturbing her.

It was an old wooden dwelling, with dingy paint and unwashed steps, before which, Ellen, after a long walk, paused. One of the front window-panes was broken, and a piece of coarse, brown paper had been pasted over the aperture. On the sill, a few yellow, sickly-looking plants were pining, in cracked bowls and tea-pots; and I appeal to the reader to say if there are many sights more dismally suggestive of squalor and discomfort, than that of a fatally diseased plant, slowly yielding up its life from the influence of filthiness and neglect. As she stepped inside the narrow, ill-lighted entry, Ellen was met by the peculiar smell arising from boiling suds mingling with other odors less suggestive of cleanliness. Up two pairs of narrow creaking stairs she made her way, tapping at a narrow door on the second landing.

"Come right in," some one called out, in a pleasant-toned voice, from the room inside.

Obeying this injunction, Ellen found herself in the presence of a large-framed, coarse-featured woman, with no possible claim to personal attractions of any sort—nothing to redeem her from positive ugliness, unless it was the benevolent smile playing about her large mouth. This was Miss Grizzell.

"Massy on us, Miss Verne, I'd begun to be afraid my old eyes would never be blest by the sight of your pleasant face again. Can't you find a place to set down? Jest take that dipper, and tunnel, and bean-pot, out of this chair, and I'll be thankful to you. You see things are in some confusion; (Ellen couldn't deny the truth of this remark;) but I caught such an onmassiful cold last week, that I've had to let things mostly take care of themselves, ever sence; for I can't get about much with the rheumatiz."

Ellen thought "things" had but indifferently justified the confidence reposed in them by their mistress, for they were in the utmost disorder.

After making many inquiries after Mr. Leroy and his "new wife," as Miss Grizzell thought proper to style Elvira, to all of which Ellen responded at length, the latter felt herself entitled to assume the initiative in the conversation, which she did by asking about the poor family living in the same house.

"Mrs. Ames and her two children, that live down in the basement, I suppose you mean," said Miss Deborah, a look of honest sympathy lighting up her homely features. "I'm afraid they're bad enough off, poor things; I wish some good Samaritan would take their case in hand. I mentioned about it to-day to a young lady that come here after my little donation to Mr. Roselif, not that I ever saw him, except Sundays, but he has so many calls on his time that we mustn't think hard if he does forget some on us, though the old pastor we had before Mr. Roselif, found time to look in upon the meanest of his flock, once in a while. But that has nothing to do with the Ameses. The little girl, Bessie, must be sick, I'm thinking, for I haven't seen her for a week; and she used to come in every day, when I was first taken with the rheumatiz—I was so bad, then, I cuold only crawl across the room on my hands and knees—and do the best she could towards putting things to rights. She's a mighty handy little creature, for one of her age: it seems to me they might get an easy sort of a place for her, to tend children or something of that sort, but Mrs. Ames says she'd rather work

her fingers to the bone than part with her children; but now she is growing so weakly, herself, I don't see how she can manage to keep the family together much longer."

"I will go and see them before leaving, but first let me put your room in order, and do what I can to make you comfortable."

"No; I'm obleeged to you," said kind-hearted Miss Grizzell; "I don't need your help half so bad as Mrs. Ames, and you'll be able to do more for her if you don't tire yourself out up here. I can jest make out to hobble around and do my own chores now, after a fashion, so I shall git along nicely."

"I am glad you look on the bright side of your lot, and bear it so cheerfully," said Ellen, not without some secret wonderment at the seeming content of the forlorn being at her side; for she had an unmitigated abhorrence of filth and disorder; and Miss Grizzell's room, with its table piled with dirty dishes, its chairs heaped with odds and ends too numerous to mention, its unwashed hearth and unswept floor, was so strongly opposed to all her ideas of comfort, that she felt it would have been a severe penance on herself to have remained there *inactive* even for a single day.

"O yes," said patient Miss Grizzell, who was not destitute of good qualities, if a peculiar aptitude for cleanliness was not to be reckoned among them, "I have learned to take things easy, and a blessed good lesson it has been to me. Everything always happens jest right, if you'll but notice it; and every person has jest the burden sent upon him he's best fitted to bear, and no other. I never had a better season's work than I've had this fall, and so I can afford to lay by for a spell, now, better than common. Some folks, in my situation, without a friend to lean on, would fret themselves all to a 'natomy for fear they was a going to be laid up all winter; but I couldn't afford to lose so much time as *that;* I should be a city pauper if I did, and I couldn't bear that; so, as my burden never has been heavier than I could bear, I hain't no fears that 'twill be this time. In a month, please Heaven, I will be back to my wash-tub again; and I've got enough of everything I need to last me till then.

The Lord has never forsaken me, thus far, and I'll trust Him to the end."

This devout expression of faith in the great Unseen, proceeding as it did from one whose outward condition seemed sufficiently deplorable, affected Ellen strongly. She felt as though she had been ungrateful to Providence for all the blessings scattered in her path, and resolved that, if she had hitherto been thankless and devoid of trust, she would be so no longer.

"My greatest trial is," resumed Miss Deborah, "that I can't get down stairs to look after Mrs. Ames and the children. Poor thing! she was brought up sort of delicate, and the hard rubs of life uses sech people up a great deal faster than it does them that's been used to roughin' it all their life, as I have. I was born in a cellar, and I'll die in my garret, please Heaven. Mrs. Ames was married out of a genteel boarding-school; and poor people's daughters don't learn much to help 'em along in that sort of a place. Mr. Ames turned out to be a miserable, drunken toad; and I hope 'tain't too much for me to say that it was a mercy to his family when he was taken away. His wife has been a very proud woman, in her day, she says so herself; and, perhaps, though it seems hard to say sech a thing, she needed trouble to make her humble. I am sure she has had her full share, and more, too. She never complained to me, but I know, when they used to live in the next story below, that he used to treat her like a brute, as he was, when he was in liquor. You can't make me believe that a woman like her would tumble down stairs, and bruise her face and bung up her eyes, as I've seen her face bruised and her eyes bunged up, more than once, without some help. I'm afraid she isn't long for this world: she coughs, at times, enough to tear her all to pieces; and she's thin as a shad. I am afraid she won't make out to keep the family together much longer; for, if the girl is down sick as well as the boy, the quicker they are sent to the hospital, if they can be got in, the better: she ain't fit to work as she does."

"If you will let me shorten my call here, I will go to them directly," said Ellen, rising.

"*O, don't mind* me," said Miss Grizzell; "they are in

misery, poor creatures, and I ain't—only with the rheumatiz."

After receiving directions to Miss Ames' room, Ellen slowly descended the stairs. She was learning a new lesson in life's experience; and asked herself how far Miss Grizzell's patient resignation, and unshaken trust in divine goodness, compensated for all the hardships and loneliness incident to her lot. She remembered to have seen the poor washerwoman irritable, impatient, harshly cross even, at her work, in times past; she had never seen her so full of thoughtful kindness for others' good, as to-day. Do we all need pain and sorrow to soften the too brilliant glare of uninterrupted prosperity, which would parch and wither the best growth of the soul, as changeless summer sunshine, untempered by cloud and storm, would scorch and destroy Earth's fairest flowers—its richest fruit?

On reaching the foot of the crazy staircase leading to the basement, or rather cellar, for it was nothing else, Ellen entered a long, narrow passage, at the farther end of which stood an old woman, busy at her wash-tub, that rested on the rough board steps connecting with the back-yard. From this poor creature, whose shaking hands were hardly equal to their task, Ellen learned which was the room of the widow Ames; and, on tapping at the door, it was opened by a pale, slight woman, thin to emaciation, with dark circles about her sunken eyes. Her forehead was contracted into sharp lines, as with constant, corroding care.

"Mrs. Ames, I presume," courteously suggested Ellen

"Yes, but I receive no visitors; I have no time for *that*." And she would have closed the door in Ellen's face.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Ames; I have not come as a visitor, but as a friend, if you will let me be such to you."

"The poor have no friends," said Mrs. Ames, with a quivering lip. "Excuse me; I am rude, I know, but in anguish one forgets ceremony. My two children are very ill, and I am so worn out, watching with them, that I am no company for any one."

"*But I came hoping to be of assistance to you*," persisted

Ellen; whereupon Mrs. Ames permitted, rather than invited, her to enter, and sit down on an old soap-box, the best seat the room afforded.

"Miss Grizzell, being confined to the room with rheumatism herself, requested me to look in, and see how you were getting along," said Ellen, with some degree of embarrassment, for it seemed almost like impertinent intrusion on her part, thus to force herself into the misery and destitution but too apparent to the most careless eye.

To her expressions of good-will, Mrs. Ames made but the briefest replies. In fact, she was so nearly exhausted, by sleepless nights and days of ceaseless anxiety, that she was hardly capable of connected thought or coherent speech; besides, being somewhat reserved and uncommunicative in disposition, she could hardly have been expected to yield her confidence, at once, to an entire stranger.

Ellen began to look about her, to discover the best method of making herself useful. It was thus that she became aware that the room which this poor family called home, was so nearly underground, that, in looking up to one of its small three-paned windows, she could see little more than the feet of the passers-by, on the sidewalk outside. The once white-washed walls were now stained and discolored, by dampness and age. A shelf, consisting of a single unplaned board, supported by brackets equally primitive in construction, held a couple of plates, a tin cup and porringer, two iron spoons, and a knife and fork. A bucket, partly filled with corn-meal, stood near the hearth, beside a half-burned fagot. In an opposite corner was a straw bed, lying on the floor, on which were two children. The younger, a boy, was asleep; one hand, which lay on the ragged but clean quilt, was skeleton-like in its attenuation; while his pallid face was unnaturally bloated. That of his sister was crimson with the burning hue of fever; and she moaned fitfully, while the nervous motion of her fingers, and the quivering of her closed eye-lids, denoted the strength of the disease in whose grasp she lay powerless.

"Where are you suffering now, poor child?" asked Ellen, tenderly, as she bent over her, for her own feelings were deeply

moved. Had not Providence raised up for herself a friend, in the person of Mr. Leroy, she might never have lived to see this day, or she might have fallen a prey to destitution as great as that she now sought to relieve.

The little girl pressed her hand to her head, in mute reply. Her mother was at the bedside in a moment :

" Does it ache very hard, Bessie, dear ?"

" Too hard to bear ; Oh dear ! Oh-h !"

" Let me bathe your head," said Ellen, looking about her for some water.

" A mustard poultice, on the back of her neck, is what she ought to have," said Mrs. Ames ; " but we are out of mustard now." And the unhealthy flush on her cheek deepened into a burning hectic at this indirect appeal for charity.

The boy, awakened by his sister's restlessness, at this instant called out for some drink. His mother, taking down the porringer, filled it with thin gruel, from a basin of the same on the hearth, and held it to his lips.

" I don't like it ; I'm sick of it," he said, with a look of nausea, as he pushed the porringer away from him ; " but I should like something different—something good to eat."

The mother's features worked convulsively ; but she turned from her child, without a word. Corn meal could not be made into sick-room delicacies ; and her purse was empty. Ellen came round to her side as, with trembling hands, she replaced the porringer on the shelf.

" O, Mrs. Ames, I know what it is to want bread—to endure the pangs of hunger and thirst ; (she shuddered at the recollection,) I cannot see it in others ; for your child's sake, you must forget all scruples of delicacy or pride, and let me do what little I can for your relief. I am going out for a few minutes, you will let me in when I come back ?"

The widow bowed, and attempted to reply, but her voice refused its office ; seizing Ellen's hand, she pressed it for a moment to her eyes, then dropped it, wet with tears.

Ellen went out on her self-appointed errand, and presently returned, bearing in her own arms a paper of arrow-root, loaf of

bread, lump of butter, box of mustard, a few soda biscuits, together with a small quantity of tea and sugar, and a pint bottle of milk. These purchases, trifling as they may appear, had exhausted her slender resources. Her face was suffused with a clear pink glow, called up by the delightful consciousness of bringing relief to the wretched.

Ah! ye who have fortune at command, lift up the bruised reed, hold back the feeble feet, driven, by want, to the verge of that inevitable grave, lying in wait for us as well; so shall ye know how infinitely more blessed it is to give than to receive.

"Now, Mrs. Ames," said Ellen, in a tone of quiet hopefulness as she laid her parcels on the soap-box, "we will soon have our invalids comfortable. You prepare the poultice, please, while I make the tea you need so much: it will taste better, I think, if you do not see it till it is quite ready."

Mrs. Ames obeyed these suggestions silently; her throat was too full to permit her speaking.

Ellen made the tea in the tin basin, now empty of gruel, without remark; poured some of it into the porringer, after having first toasted a slice of bread on a fork, and insisted on Mrs. Ames partaking of the same, while *she* attended to the wants of the little boy.

The soda biscuits, soaked in weak tea, he evidently found much more to his taste, than had proved the corn meal gruel. Steaing a furtive glance at Mrs. Ames, to see if she enjoyed her tea Ellen perceived that large tears were rolling down her cheeks and falling unheeded on her plate. Her own eyes overflowed at the sight; but, instantly checking herself, she strove to smile on the wide-eyed child, who watched her every look and movement as she fed him from the iron spoon.

"I would like to make you some arrow-root," she said encouragingly, "you will like that; but it is growing late and I must go now; I will come again, to-morrow. Good-bye, little one.

"I hope you will all have as comfortable a night as can be hoped," she said, giving her hand to Mrs. Ames, in parting.

"Thank you, it is all I can say; I am never good at talking when I feel much."

"Do not try to talk; save your strength for your children. What little I can do for you is a pleasure, not a trouble to me. Good-bye."

She groped her way along the narrow passage, which was already dark, and up the rickety staircase; emerging once more into the noise and bustle of a crowded thoroughfare.

CHAPTER XIV.

EDITOR OF THE "WEEKLY CAUTERIZER," IN HIS CAPACITY OF CRITIC.

It was nearly dark when Ellen reached Laramont's. The hall seemed unusually spacious; and the broad, circular, richly carpeted staircase positively magnificent, in contrast with the small, dingy rooms she had so recently quitted.

Elvira's door was fastened; she was giving the hours of day to repose, that she might devote those of night to pleasure Retracing her steps, Ellen found a single unoccupied peg on the hat-tree, and hanging her bonnet and shawl thereon, proceeded to arrange her hair, with which the wind had taken some liberties, at the hall mirror, greatly to the edification, and her own discomposure no less, of several young gentlemen (it would never do to apply the term *boys* to individuals in long-skirted coats, and incipient moustaches, plainly visible through an opera-glass), who hovered about the outer verge of the charmed drawing-room precincts; but, having no lady acquaintances therein, hardly felt themselves privileged to enter. With downcast eyes and slightly flushed cheeks she passed between them.

Treatises on etiquette commend the modesty of those young ladies who can cross a crowded apartment with perfect self-possession, not deeming themselves of sufficient consequence to attract the attention of spectators; but, so far as I have been able to form an opinion, the habit of mingling freely with society

has much more to do than modesty, in giving one an air of ease and self-possession, in crowded assemblies. Now, no one could be less puffed up in her own esteem than Ellen; but yet she could not enter a room, indiscriminately filled, without a faint flutter of spirits, of which her simple, unobtrusive manners gave no outward token. She would have been thankful to have felt herself unobserved, and to have been so; but the gas had just been turned on; there were numerous groups of idlers gathered in little knots about the room; and Ellen must have been blind not to have seen that many eyes were raised at her entrance, and that her own attire was noticeably plain, in contrast with the dresses, so brilliant in color and rich in material, by which she was surrounded. It is in scenes like these that Miss Bennett feels herself in her most congenial element; here she flirts and flutters, smiles and languishes, with an ease and grace poor Ellen may vainly aspire to imitate. Seating herself in the shadow of a heavy damask curtain, she glanced timidly at the group of persons nearest her, several of whom were talking with that rapid utterance and those animated gestures which betoken an active interest in the subject of conversation.

"What is all this difference of opinion about, good neighbors mine?" asked Mr. Trueburn, raising his eyes from the paper he had been scanning with close and eager attention.

"It is only a new book," said Miss Bennett carelessly, "about whose merits they will neither agree, nor agree to differ."

"I suppose every one has a right to express his ideas, on any subject whatever, if it is not done in an offensive manner," said a modest looking young man recently from the country.

"No one questions your right in that respect," rejoined Mr. Melville, a little disdainfully; "and reserving the same right to myself, I repeat that the heroine of this spirited work is an angel."

"An angel! preserve us!" muttered Mr. Trueburn, "then I, for one, am heartily glad she's strongly *bound* in good substantial book-covers, out of the way of present company. I never knew but one woman who set up for a perfectionist—that was

what she called herself, I believe—and I would have gone a mile out of my way, any day, rather than have met her, with the stand-aside-I-am-holier-than-thou air, she thought proper to assume towards us outside barbarians. She had no sort of tolerance for any species of innocent amusement, and set her face—a sour-visaged one it was, too, like a flint—against every species of rational enjoyment; as though we had been placed in this beautiful world, with all its cheering sights and sounds, its ways and means of happiness, only to moan and lament therein. By the way, she was frightfully self-opinionated; and ready to scratch your eyes out if you did not at once fall in with her own peculiar dogmas; and was forever contrasting her frigid saintliness with your own shortcomings, until you did almost come to feel as though hanging was too good for you."

"Very likely," said Mr. Melville, sarcastically; "but allow me to say that your remarks are wide of the present case."

"If you have read the book, Mr. Trueburn, I am quite willing to submit to your opinion of its merits," respectfully suggested the young man from the country.

"What is the name of it?"

"Naomi Nettlewood."

"It is on my list of 'books received,' but I have not yet found time to read it; neither have I reviewed it," added Mr. Trueburn, smiling; "for I do actually think it necessary to read the title-page, table of contents, and get some little insight into the main drift of a story, before I publish my dictum, for or against it; which is more than some critics can say for themselves. However, if you will give me a slight synopsis of the book under notice, I can easily tell if it suits my taste."

"I am not very good at telling a story," said Mr. Peperidge, the young man from the country, reddening at the thought of his numerous listeners; "but if you will have patience, I will do the best I can. Ahem! To begin at the beginning, Naomi, like Thackeray's Blanche Amory, seems never to have been appreciated by any of the members of her own family; and when she married, which she did without consulting or caring for their wishes in the matter, they very nearly dropped her acquaintance;

which she didn't mind in the least, until she came to be left a widow, when she needed their help, and was by no means backward in asking for it. Well, her relations mostly had families of their own to support, and what assistance they did give, came in the very unwelcome shape of advice. Her father, who was far from rich in this world's goods, was not disposed to be very liberal in his aid to a daughter who had never been any great comfort to him. She warmly resented what she considered his unnatural niggardliness, in grudgingly doling forth small scraps of bounty, and showed small gratitude for what he *did* give, which, in my humble opinion, was but a poor way of increasing his liberality."

"Have the goodness to tell the story, and leave us to draw our own inferences," interposed Mr. Melville, sharply.

"I will do the best I can, if you won't put me out by interrupting me," protested the narrator, quite taken aback by this unexpected rebuff. "Let's see, where was I?"

"Ahead of your story, at all events, for you haven't mentioned a word about the wretched poverty she was reduced to, with a young family looking to her for bread."

"I hadn't got to that part yet."

"Certainly you had; for what would she have cared about renewing the acquaintance with uncongenial, unsympathizing relatives, not one of whom had half her accomplishments and stylish appearance, if she hadn't been too poor to get along without them?"

"Well, let her be poor, then; poor as Job's cat, for aught I care, if you will only let me go on with my story."

"Proceed, sir," said Mr. Melville, throwing himself back in his chair with an expression of forced resignation excruciating to behold.

Mr. Peperidge resumed: "You all understand that this charmingly accomplished and stylish young widow was left nearly destitute of the necessaries of life, and that her cold-blooded relations, instead of rushing to her relief"——

"Oh!" interposed Mr. Melville, "it sets my nerves all on edge to hear a story mutilated in this way."

"Hadn't you better tell it yourself?" retorted Mr. Peperidge, indignation getting the better of his diffidence for the nonce.

"I don't mind trying," said Mr. Melville, with an air of cool self-assurance: "Naomi was a genius, and want drove her to the use of her pen. After many trials and discouragements, she succeeded, at last, in winning for herself a brilliant literary reputation; and what was more to the purpose, in her circumstances, she amassed a handsome fortune by the sale of her productions."

"Her self-reliant perseverance under difficulties make her an honor to her sex, who can but glory in her success," said Mr. Trueburn, with hearty approval; "and now, Mr. Melville, your paragon, I suppose, vindicates your assumption of angelic excellence in her behalf, by heaping coals of fire on the heads of her cold-hearted relatives, in the way of generous bounty and gifts undeserved."

Mr. Melville indulged in a well-bred stare of surprise, before replying: "She was no such milk-and-waterish sort of a person, and served the mean-spirited creatures as they deserved—turned them the cold shoulder—cut them dead if they so much as presumed to beg a favor at her hands, and, best of the whole, wrote a book and showed off all her relatives and acquaintances in their true characters; shabby enough most of them are, I can assure you."

"And *this*, Mr. Melville, is your idea of an angel! One who returns evil for evil, and employs her rare intellectual powers in administering to any, and every, one who is so unfortunate as to fall under her displeasure a good sound drubbing—in print. Truly, this is profaning the celestial fire with a vengeance; leaving out of the question that venerable command: 'Do ye unto others as ye would that others should do unto you,' which *some persons* still believe to be binding. If every authorling who owes us a grudge, or is in want of a *subject* for his mental dissecting-room, is to be at full liberty to pounce upon us as a 'study of character'—in a moment of relaxation or foolish pleasantry, perhaps; *possibly*, in a fit of unwonted spleen brought about by a vicious indigestion—furbelow us up, in fantastic, fanciful dra-

peries, distort us in feature, blacken us in complexion, and, ticketing us with a false label, or fictitious name rather, holds us up to the critical gaze of a scandal-loving public, which through all paltry disguises recognizes us with loud acclaim :—Bah ! if such a course of action is to be not only tolerated but approved, then, all freedom in social intercourse is at an end, unless every one so much as suspected of any proclivity for book-craft be henceforth locked and barred outside the pale of good society. Who wants to be seized upon, unawares, and placed, nolens volens, under the mayhap awkward scalpel of some bungling tyro in spiritual dissection ?"

"No one, certainly ; you are quite right there," said Miss Bennett, with a significant smile.

"If *I* have been suspected of any such meanness," said Mr. Trueburn, looking her full in the face, "I distinctly deny the truth of the suspicion. I would rather a newspaper article should be harmlessly insipid, than have it derive its piqnancy from the spice of personal malice : in regard to books, my opinion is the same. Let them excite the nobler, but never the baser emotions of our nature."

Miss Bennett was silenced, and a little discomfited.

"It is the easiest thing in the world for those who cannot write a book that will take, to carp at those who can," said Mr. Melville, maliciously.

"I do not profess either the ability or inclination for book-making," said Mr. Trueburn, with quiet dignity ; but, if I did, I am quite sure that, though no saint, I would sooner benefit a small number of readers, than pander to a vitiated taste in the million. After all, Mr. Melville, I do believe that there is still so much of *the angel* left in our fallen natures, that the most world-hardened amongst us are, at times, conscious of the possession of an inner spiritual treasure, compared with which, gold is but dross."

The short silence which followed this assertion was broken by Mr. Melville's remarking :

"I suppose, sir, you care less for skill in characterization than for stirring incident, thrilling adventure, and a catastrophe that

makes one's hair bristle on end with horror, and the blood curdle in one's veins with intensity of loathing."

"Heaven forbid! the intense school of literature, as full of bloody horrors as a Spanish bull-fight, with here and there a scrap of superhuman excellence, thrown in by way of moral seasoning, is my especial abhorrence. If the world is infested with fiends in human guise, I've no fancy for receiving them as friends and bosom companions, through the introduction of the novelist: let the common hangman and 'Newgate Calender' have them rather. Furthermore, if I really was desirous of indulging in the vulgar sensualism of getting myself drunk, I'd go about it in the regular orthodox fashion, with punches, cobblers, and whatnot, as soon as intoxicate my brain, the noblest portion of my physical structure, with the fiery spiritual stimulants, which my office of critic has, more than once, made me scald my mental palate in gulping down. Upon my word, I felt as though there was a brick in my hat for hours afterward."

"Bravo! give us your fist, old boy," cried out the young gentleman from the country, forgetting his awe of the ladies in a sudden fit of enthusiasm, then as suddenly recollecting himself, with the red signal of confusion on his cheeks.

Mr. Melville bestowed on him a contemptuous glance, as he said, "A lackadaisical, too-good-for-this-world, milk-and-waterish heroine, let who will, admire; to my taste, a woman of spirit, who is able to take care of her own interests, and retaliate the cut direct on false friends, is worth a score of such, any day."

Bowing to Miss Bennett with pointed gallantry, he looked at his watch, and pretending to recollect an engagement, beat a hasty retreat. Thereafter, Miss Adelphine became abstracted, and quite oblivious of others' presence; while Miss Pettigrew maintained the same attitude of graceful indifference she had preserved throughout the entire conversation. An amiable simplicity was the role she at present affected, and she had all a weak woman's (or weak man's either) horror of strong-mindedness and bluestockingism. Literary women so seldom make good matches, and a good match (a handsome house in a handsome

street, three servants and a satin-lined carriage inclusive) she looked upon as an object well worthy woman's loftiest aspirations. She made it a point, however, to *skim over* the very lightest works of the day; and, indeed, to acquaint herself with the principal incidents of the novels she was sure to hear talked about in her own immediate circle of acquaintances. To do Miss Pettigrew justice, she can hardly be said to have been devoid of a taste of her own in literary matters; for she decidedly preferred books in fancy bindings to those in plain ones; and liked a volume bound in red "Morocco antique," with gilt back, better than one in embossed leather, with gold corners; although these latter had the honor of ranking second in her estimation Of this style of book, she had a number on her etagere, in the form of illustrated annuals and souvenirs; and much she liked them, too, as they were so conveniently shallow that she could easily wade through them, with but little disorder or detriment to her ordinary mental trim. As to Ellen, she had listened to the whole conversation with the keenest interest; and at its close had become earnestly, even sadly, thoughtful. She felt that she, too, belonged to the class of authorlings—an unsuccessful member thereof, besides—of whom Mr. Trueburn had spoken in accents so contemptuous. She congratulated herself that none one present was aware of the fact, and promised herself that through no confidential disclosures of her own, should they ever become so. As to writers studying the character of those about them, she could not see the harm of the practice, if the knowledge of human nature thus acquired, were not, from malevolent motives, applied to unworthy purposes. In this opinion she fortified herself (woman-like, leaning ever upon masculine strength) by calling to her support Pope's famous axiom:—"The proper study of mankind is man."

"The physician," she said, continuing her self-communings, as though she had been alone in the room, "cannot properly perform the health-restoring duties of his profession, unless thoroughly familiar with the exact position of every nerve, muscle, and artery, in the physical frame; and is it not equally clear that he who would benefit his species by haply ministering to minds dis

eased, must be thoroughly conversant with the anatomy of the same?"

It is not very agreeble, certainly, to think of ourselves, or our friends, as subjects for the student's dissecting-knife—though, for that matter, the idea of becoming food for loathsome worms is not so ineffably attractive, in prospect, as to be very strenuously insisted on,—nevertheless, the welfare of the living makes us really desirous that *some one* should thus subserve the interests of suffering humanity; and why not equally anxious that the mental characteristics of *some one* should be correctly analyzed by those best able to turn the result to account, for the edification of mankind in general?

CHAPTER XV.

BITTER-SWEET.

At eight o'clock, the carriage came for the Bennetts and Leroys. Elvira, knowing herself to be well dressed, and with a pleasant evening in prospect, was in charming spirits, as she accompanied her husband down stairs. He had hardly reached the hall, however, before, excusing himself for a few moments, he ran back, and throwing open the door called out:

"I had almost forgotten to tell you, Ellen, that I dropped in to see your publisher, on my way home, and he said—I remembered his exact words, so as to repeat them to you—that he supposed your book was about dead, and he should just about get out of it, with a whole skin. Too bad, that you should have thrown away your time, for I don't know how many months! I am sorry that I ever suggested the idea of your writing for publication."

"Please never speak of it again, Mr. Leroy," said Ellen, crushing the tears beneath her drooping lids.

"Never, if you do not wish it." He lingered a moment, as if he would fain have offered some consolation for the pain her

quivering tones told him his words had inflicted, then closed the door softly, and was gone.

"It is all over," she said to herself—"the first bitterness of disappointment and all my vain dreams of authorship. I hope the book may never be mentioned again, in my presence. Even *he* thinks I mistook my vocation when I exchanged my needle for a pen." But yet, even while saying this, she was dimly conscious of half-developed powers within herself, which it would be equally difficult to crush out, or suffer to remain inert, and it was in a tone of unutterable sadness that she murmured, below her breath—

"Let it die, like the remembrance of a dream that is past."

For more than half an hour had she been sitting in an attitude of listless abstraction very unusual to her, when she was startled from her reflections by a quick, sharp rap at the door. She obeyed the summons, and was surprised by the sight of the very last person in the world she could have expected to see—Mr. Trueburn. Stranger still, he courteously requested the favor of half an hour's conversation with herself. Accepting the chair Ellen had drawn up for him, he asked, with an abrupt directness of purpose habitual to the man—

"Have I the pleasure of speaking to the author of 'Fairy Tales and Others,' a small duodecimo that came out early in the year?"

She was so completely taken by surprise that she could only murmur a confused assent; mentally adding, "That book again! am I never to hear the last of it?"

"I have read the volume, the *whole* of it," he resumed, "which, however reviewers may act to the contrary, is the only method of forming a correct estimate of any book; for a work with any claim to originality is pervaded by a certain subtle something, which I defy the ablest critic, without close study, to analyze, and place before his readers. Would you like to hear my candid and unbiassed opinion of the 'Fairy Tales'?"

"Oh, Mr. Trueburn, anything but *that*; please excuse me." And she held up her hand as if to ward off some threatened blow.

This unexpected reply quite puzzled him, but, after a minute's hesitancy, he said, with his usual straightforwardness of assertion,

"Indeed, Miss Verne, I can see no good reason for your repugnance to speak of what was, all things considered, by no means a discreditable performance. In my opinion, the first work of a young writer is generally of no great value, excepting as it gives indications of the richness or poverty of the intellectual quarry whence it was hewn—if only the right *materiel* be there, the cunning hands which is to mould it into forms of immortal beauty, practice will surely give. Your first book I read with pleasure; because, although somewhat crude in manner and redundant in matter, it contains some original ideas, happy in the conception and most happily expressed, which betray the germs of much that is excellent.

"But, let me ask, what first induced you to take up the pen? Did you recognize in yourself the possession of a faculty not given to all, and resolve to employ it, not only to subserve your own interests, but with an eye to the benefit of your fellow-creatures? or were the motives which prompted you purely personal, pardon me if I say selfish? and, because your first literary effort failed to win for you success and a name, is it the writhings of mortified vanity that has since kept the talent, given you for improvement, buried in the earth—rusting in idleness?"

When he commenced speaking, Ellen's whole attitude had been shrinking and deprecatory; but before he concluded, her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes sparkling with interest, as she leaned forward to reply in low, earnest tones:

"Ten thousand times, *no*; it was not disappointed vanity that enjoined on me the long penance of silence, for it *has* been a penance, Mr. Trueburn. Many's the time that I have been sorely tempted to dash my thoughts upon paper, just, as your inimitable Hawthorne says, 'to still an unquiet impulse in me;' but, the fear of doing wrong, in wasting my time over what would never be of the slightest conceivable value to any created mortal, restrained my hand. You have the actual truth of the matter, now, sir. I thought it my duty to hold down, with a firm

hand, my scribbling propensities, before they became too strong for my control. I saw my writings condemned as trash; and thought it worse than folly to throw away my time in producing what suited my readers (if I ever had any, besides the critics) no better than it suited myself; for I could never even suit myself, Mr. Trueburn, and the conceptions that pleased me most, I could never well execute. The gorgeous summer lightnings, when brought to earth, are but bottled electricity; so, the brightest creations of my fancy were wondrously tame, namby-pamby sprites, when fairly imprisoned in words, and brought down to realms of reality."

"Apart from the imperfections which inevitably cling to all human efforts, I think, in your own case, the want of a much more satisfactory result to your labors is partly owing to the lack of a patient and careful revision, of which your work shows but few traces. You must learn to prune and retrench; to carefully elaborate the details of your narrative; and never leave a sentence with a ragged etymological seam to it, if you will allow me to borrow a figure from that superfine needle-work you are so exquisite in accomplishing. In this work-a-day world, he who wins must strive. Let me see, how many vain attempts did Bruce's spider make to reach the point to which it wished to fasten its web, before its final success? At all events, in striving to benefit others, you cannot fail of self-improvement; and that, assuredly, is no small good obtained, in a life which seems to have been given us that we may prepare for a better. And now, for the cause of my obtruding upon you all this unasked, perhaps unwelcome, advice: I wish to secure your services as a regular contributor to the paper under my control."

"*Me!* do my ears deceive me? Knowing the faults of my composition as you do, will you take the responsibility of placing before your readers what may not in the least suit them?"

"I am quite willing to run that risk," he said, smiling at the artless simplicity which permitted her to depreciate the productions of her brain to their proposed purchaser. "By acceding to my proposals," he continued, dropping his eyes to the carpet, and speaking in a careless, matter-of-fact tone, "you will become

mistress of a small but sure income; for I shall always look upon your articles as drafts to be cashed at sight."

"Many thanks; I accept your offer most gratefully," said Ellen; her limited experience, however, preventing her knowing how exactly opposed to all newspaper precedent was the proposal she had just received—made, as it was, to one who had still reputation to win. "Of course, you will allow me to choose whatever signature I may fancy to place over my writings," she added, "as I would not have the other boarders at Laramont's know that I belong to that class of authorlings you proposed banishing from good society, this afternoon."

"I do not rank you amongst that class of writers who are ready to malign their nearest of kin, for hire," he returned, in reply to her look of arch meaning: "But seriously, Miss Verne, I am going to give you a bit of what I consider sensible advice; it is, to get rid of this morbid sensibility to the opinion of others—and the sooner you do it the better. Never write worse than your very best; and do not wear out your health and temper with useless fears for the result—by worse than useless heartburnings, if your reception by a criticising public is not what you could desire."

"Discriminating censure I am thankful for; but wholesale and sweeping condemnation is, to a young writer, of all things, the most bitter. And O, Mr. Trueburn, I am so little accustomed to being found fault with!—to being reproved with harshness and asperity!"

"It won't hurt you any," he rejoined, with blunt kindliness of manner.

Ellen thought of what she had suffered at the first adverse criticism of her own work, and was sure it *did* hurt.

"It is very difficult to know one's self," he went on; "and how, let me ask, is one to remedy one's shortcomings unless they are pointed out to one, by some keen-eyed friend or impartial critic? The person had need to be wary, though, who attempts to insinuate, however cautiously, to the young aspirant for literary honors (of all created beings the most techily sensitive) that the eldest-born of his brain has its faults, like everything

else of human conception. As a general rule, the faithful censor, in such a case, will be called a monster of barbarity and injustice for his pains."

"Perhaps you are right," said Ellen, coloring; "and I hope I may profit by what you have been telling me. Of one thing I am certain; if I have the power your words seemed to attribute to me, I will not, in future, mar its exercise by any want of care—of tireless, unwearying effort."

"Well said!" he rejoined, in a tone of hearty approval; "maintain this resolve, and I have no fears for the ultimate result. Give yourself up freely to your own impulses in composition, without any dread of your audience, or rather, readers, I should have said. Do not be afraid of writing differently from others, for originality is the life-pulse of a book; and, above all things, never write for us critics, while the mass of the people have souls, which, though choked up with the weeds gendered of care and worldliness, are yet capable of being roused to high and holy purposes. Good night; my ungracious task is ended: I am quite sure I shall never have occasion to renew it."

"I owe you much; and, believe me, am suitably grateful," said Ellen, giving him her hand in the most frank and friendly manner.

"Few persons, in your place, would think so; and I must say that you have borne the infliction of unpalatable advice with rare graciousness of demeanor."

"Thank you, but I have not found it unpalatable, and so do not deserve the compliment; and I am only too glad to have a friend"—she colored at her own boldness in according him this title—"who is capable of advising me in literary matters. But when will you let me commence writing for your paper?"

"You cannot commence too soon." And he looked down, with something like self-gratulation, at the animated and speaking face that had been so pale and drooping at his entrance. He did not know, as he went back to his room, how his own face had brightened under the genial influence of a kindly deed unselfishly performed.

With light, elastic tread, Ellen went to the little pine desk,

occupying a conspicuous position in her sleeping-room—there were no luxurious appointments *there*—and drawing writing materials therefrom, returned with them to the parlor. Now she was at full liberty to "dash her thoughts upon paper," as she had herself phrased it, and she rejoiced, as a strong man to run a race. Almost too rapidly to find expression in words, ideas thronged in upon her teeming brain. Twice, in her eager haste of composition, the nib of her pen was crushed, as it was dashed down upon the paper, and, being each time replaced by a fresh one, her hand resumed its flight across the rapidly filling page. So hastily were her letters turned off that they were little better than scrawls; and the words they formed, to herself barely legible. An hour went by, seeming but a moment's space. The door-knob was softly turned, and Mr. Leroy came into the room alone; and, drawing off his white gloves, approached the table at which she sat. She saw him not; her gaze, piercing and earnest, was introverted, reading and transcribing the mysteries she found written on the tablets of her own soul.

"Ellen, will you not speak to me?"

She raised her eyes, looking at him as though he had been afar off (I hope I do not fail to make myself intelligible), and saying—

"Hush! dear Laurencé, please, and I will be with you in a minute," she bent once more over the sheet she was so rapidly filling.

He sat down and watched her with feelings more deeply moved than they could have been by mere surprise or curiosity. Her lips were slightly apart, and almost tremulous with excitement, (those lips which had just pronounced his own name in an accent of tenderness of which the speaker was wholly unconscious,) her cheeks of a rosy brightness, and her eyes aglow from the living fire within. He had never seen her so enchantingly, so ethereally beautiful. Shall I confess that, good man though he was, he longed, with an almost irrepressible longing, to take her in his arms and fold her to his heart?

"Shockingly improper!"

I know it, dear reader; but what can I do? If I had the

control of Mr. Leroy, he should be as high above human wea nesses as I could place him ; but, as I am simply the humble fami historian who chronicles his sayings and doings, my duty is inexc able—" to nought extenuate nor aught set down in malice."

He was quick to detect his own folly ; and, rising hastily, placed his chair in such a position as to shut out the vision of t fair scribe ; and gave himself up to his own communings.

Presently Ellen got up and came round to his side.

" Why are you so soon home, Mr. Leroy ?"

Her voice had lost that ineffable sweetness of intonation wh had so pleasantly thrilled on his ear. Why should he have wi ed it otherwise ? He could not have told, but the fact remai the same.

" Because I was half-wearied to death," he said, in reply her question, " with the scraping of the fiddles, the polking schottisching, and the trying to look as though I was enjoy myself, when I was bored within an inch of my life. I am tha ful, I am sure, that it is decently still, here, to-night—that tramping up and down, up and down, those noisy stairs has s ped for once."

He bowed his head in his hands as he finished speaking.

" You are singularly fond of home and quiet," said Ellen, thinking aloud.

" I should be if I had them," he returned, with something bitterness in his tone. " But you, Ellen, I cannot make you to-night," he added abruptly, raising his head to look at " What friends have you that you should be so very much ta up in writing to them that you couldn't even stop to speak me till you had finished your letter ?"

" Excuse the rudeness, please ; but I should have lost whole train of thought going before, if I had not brought it conclusion, at the time. You were mistaken, however, in posing it to be a letter ; I was writing for publication."

She rather enjoyed the look of blank astonishment with wh this communication was received.

" For publication !" he repeated in amazement ; " well, I fess myself puzzled. Here I go away, leaving you with a

on your face that has haunted me all the evening; and when I come back, with the benevolent intention of trying to lighten your disappointment, I find you writing away at railroad speed, and in the best of spirits; truly, woman's caprices are past finding out. Who do you think will publish your new work? I doubt if your former publisher could be prevailed on to accept another manuscript, on any terms."

"I have not the remotest intention of troubling him with a second," she hastily replied; "and I might take exceptions to your very flattering estimate of my scribblings, at another time, but I am not to be moved by trifles, to-night. Give me joy, brother mine, that I may go back to my dear old occupation of spoiling steel pens, and soiling foolscap, without any compunctious twinges of conscience, to spoil my pleasure in the process. Know, then, that I am engaged by Mr. Trueburn to write articles for his weekly paper; and I am not to be a gratuitous writer either. He came in, a short time after you left, and it is all arranged. You may well say I am in good spirits: my heart is as light as a feather. I only hope I may not fall below Mr. Trueburn's expectation, and make him repent of his kindness."

After expressing pleasure that *she* was pleased, Mr. Leroy leaned thoughtfully back in his chair. He was calling to mind all the tokens of interest Mr. Trueburn had manifested toward Ellen, since the first day of their arrival at Laramont's—his manifold enquiries respecting her early life; and the adroitness with which he had drawn from him, in a moment of unguarded confidence, the secret of Ellen's authorship, which she had requested him never to divulge. Without knowing anything to the prejudice of the outspoken editor, a sudden feeling of repugnance, if not actual dislike, began to spring up in his heart toward him, for which he would himself have been puzzled to account.

"What sort of a person is this Mr. Trueburn, Ellen?"

"Of the very best sort," she responded, promptly; "he is a man to whom you give your confidence without the slightest fear of its being betrayed or abused: I trust him fully. He is a little exacting, perhaps, but no more so to others, I should judge, than to himself: he is just; and his conversation seems to me

infinitely more manly and wholesome than most of the frivolous small talk, stuffed with stale compliments, one hears down stairs. I warn you that, hereafter, you have a rival in my regards."

She spoke lightly, playfully, and without the least shade of embarrassment in her manner; for she felt sure she cherished for her hearer but the regard of a sister, and that the tender feeling which might have ripened into love had died from want of love's aliment—hope. So she thought aloud before him, as in olden times; but his eyes fell and his pale cheek lost a shade of its pallor, as he asked, "What do you mean, Ellen?"

"I mean that I no longer look upon you as the only sound-hearted, unselfish man amongst my acquaintances: I have added one to the list of my friends—short enough yet."

"You are very much interested in this Mr. Trueburn—this stranger—that you have studied his character so closely, and found in it so much to admire."

"Yes, sir; I am, and it is well that I should be; for, as he seems to have constituted himself my literary counsellor and guide, it is quite important that he should be a person on whose judgment and disposition I can safely rely."

She met the fixed gaze with which Mr. Leroy listened to this assertion, with a bright, ingenuous glance; and no tell-tale blush tinged her clear cheek. Somehow, he felt relieved; and his suspicions that Mr. Trueburn sought more than friendship in his acquaintance with Ellen, were for the time allayed. For some reason, which he could not, which he *did* not seek to explain to himself, he felt a mortal repugnance to seeing one who, all through girlhood, had leaned solely on his will for guidance, transfer her allegiance, with a higher and holier sanction, to another. True his business prospects were anything but encouraging; and he was in no condition to be generous, as he had that very day more than once found occasion to repeat; and yet, to have seen Ellen fairly installed in a comfortable home of her own, with one who would have made her happiness his first care, was a positive misery, even in anticipation.

As a perception somewhat like that expressed above made itself vaguely felt, a keen pang smote him as he thought how lit

tle he deserved the epithet—"unselfish." What if anything should happen to deprive Ellen of his support? How desirable, in that case, that she should have a permanent shelter from the storms of life, and other hearts than his in which to trust.

"At least, these birds of evil omen shall be driven from my head before they find time to build nests in my hair," he resolutely assured himself. "She shall still be to me a dearly cherished sister, and if Mr. Trueburn asks her of me, and he is worthy of her, assuredly she shall be his, if she so wills."

Little recked Ellen, that she had been mentally given in marriage to one she had never dreamed of as a lover, while her own thoughts were far enough from matrimonial projects. It was her cheerful tones which roused him, at last, from the somewhat gloomy speculations in which, of late, he had been specially prone to lose himself. Her voice was low and soft, and she was speaking musingly, rather than addressing him.

"Strange," she said, "that a few words of discriminative encouragement from one of the sterner sex should so easily persuade me to renew the pursuit of an abandoned project! Is this only a fresh proof of man's intellectual supremacy, as well as superior power of volition? But, admitting that his reasoning powers give him the advantage over us, in the solution of life's graver problems, still the thousand and one minutiæ of daily life—those trifles which go so far towards making up man's weal or wo—are only revealed to woman's microscopic vision."

She looked up just in time to catch sight of the ironic smile flitting across the face of her now attentive listener.

"At the vexed théme again, Nelly! What matters it that a woman will never rear an Egyptian pyramid, or construct a Roman aqueduct? while man, just as surely, will never attain the sublime patience requisite for darning a stocking; I speak from personal experience; for many's the time and oft, that I have attempted the feat, with most lamentable failure."

"What a reply? how different from what I should have received from—Mr. Bennett, for instance."

"He would have said"——

"O, he would have laid his hand on his heart, or where it is

supposed to be, with a grace of attitude Beau Brummel would not have disdained, and have declared it was against his principles to argue with a *lady:* let her assert whatever she liked, he could not be guilty of the rudeness of contradicting a female. Notwithstanding Mr. Bennett's implied belief to the contrary, I do believe we have some faint germs of intellect, which, with proper culture, may yet make us "——

She paused abruptly and bit her lip.

"May make you what, Ellen?"

"Fit companion for him who was created in God's own image," she said hastily, as if glad to get the words out of her mouth.

There was some little awkwardness in the pause succeeding this reply; Ellen removed it by saying, with a vivacity which was partly assumed:

"How malicious of you, Mr. Leroy, to pelt me off my dignified speculative stilts with an absurd old stocking! but that shall not prevent my acknowledging that I have received from one of your pyramid-building sex clearer perceptions of what I owe to myself, and—you need not smile at my supposed vanity—to others. If I have the gift of expression, in a greater degree than another, it must have been given me for use, and I will employ it for others' amusement if I can; for their benefit if I may. If I can succeed in cheering onward, in the path of rectitude and well-doing, one single, lowly, struggling fellow-mortal, I will not repine that Providence has denied me the magic gift of eloquence, with which to move the multitude; but rather rejoice in the limited amount of good my humble powers may accomplish. Because I cannot carol like the lark, or vie with the nightingale in harmony, shall I refuse to sing the homely note that is my own?"

"Rather different language, this, Ellen, from what you used when your book first came out."

"I know it; and it is Mr. Trueburn who has shown me the subject in a new light, and kindly opened for me the path I had never hoped to tread again. Supported by his approval, I shall *walk it with* a courage I never felt before. Will you believe me,

if I tell you that the first rough outline of my second book is already in my head?—its principal character one whose spirit has been brightened and polished into almost heavenly lustre by the daily attrition of all the cares and ills that flesh is heir to."

"You forget, Ellen, that, when your book is finished, it will, after all, be but a novel—one of those works of fiction which a considerable portion of the Christian community condemn in word, if not in act."

"If I thought I was doing wrong in cultivating, and exercising to the utmost, the powers entrusted to my charge, that consciousness would palsy my hand in its best efforts," said Ellen, doubtingly, as she bent her head in thought.

She was but a minute silent, then, raising her eyes with flashing glance, she said in a tone of unconscious triumph, "If I am to believe the statements made in the critical essays I have been reading of late, there have been writers who have robed vice and folly in such gorgeous and enchanting tissues, that the wise have been bewildered—the weak led astray. How are these brilliant intellects, so gifted and yet so perverted, to be foiled but with their own weapons, drawn from fiction's powerful armory? You laugh at my presumption; but, if my arm is weak, my resolution is strong. I will cast my two mites into the literary treasury, trusting it may be recorded of me 'She hath done what she could.' At the worst, I shall but be striving to effect what the most renowned artists, with the full sanction of the Christian world, are ever striving to accomplish—idealize objects and scenes drawn from nature, artfully disposing the lights and shadows, for the better production of the desired effect."

She paused, blushing at the enthusiasm which had hurried her into this lavish display of her innermost thoughts and aspirations.

"It seems but a day," said Mr. Leroy, looking afar off into vacancy, "since you were but a child, Ellen, sitting on a low stool at my feet, and looking up to me for guidance and instruction. *How all that is* changed! 'tis you who should be teacher

now. Ah! Ellen, how different your aspirations from mine! which are all of the earth, earthy." And he threw himself back in his chair, sighing wearily.

"Mine are *but* aspirations, worthless until proved in deeds," she replied quickly; "and it is abominably selfish of me to be troubling you with all my plans and cares, when you are more than sufficiently burdened with your own. Let me be listener now; how is business?"

"Bad enough, at least with us—money tight, and trade dull. I used to think I had care enough, when I worked at my trade; but I could almost always shake it off when I went home of an evening; but now, business is never out of my head; even in my dreams I am driving sharp bargains with reluctant purchasers. You needn't look so startled, Nelly; by *sharp* I do not mean dishonest, and I abhor, with all my mind, might and strength, those paltry deceptions called tricks of the trade. It was not longer ago than yesterday, that I overheard one of the clerks at the store call me a puritanical old fogy, because I reproved him for taking a high price for articles of quite inferior quality of a person wholly ignorant of their real worth. 'Why,' says Smith, the clerk, 'it was a fair bargain, for the buyer saw the goods as plainly as I did, and I only took him up at his own offer;' and this, though he knew, all the while, that his customer was mistaking a Lowel print for French calico, and Lyonese cloth for Thibet. I believe I shall have to make up my mind to turn him off; he's an excellent salesman, to be sure, but I do hate to hear him declaring some old last year's fabric to be 'all the rage;' and that stripes are the latest style, because we happen to be out of plaids which are really the reigning fashion. Then, he'll put on such an air of candor and veracity, while assuring some faded old damsel that a snuff-colored silk exactly suits her complexion, when she hasn't gotten any to suit, that it isn't in human nature to resist his imposition. He asks old Madame Doloroux, the most benevolent creature in the world, when she ventures to hint that his charges are rather high, if she is not willing he should make one-quarter per cent. profit, when he very well knows he is making twenty.

"If deception does not amount to a downright *spoken* lie, he thinks it no sin to deceive; and will sell a silk for nine shillings a yard, to a lady who drives to the shop in her own carriage, while she who comes afoot can buy the same article, at the other end of the counter, for two-thirds of the money. I am afraid he does worse than that: I accidentally came across a roll of poplin, directed to his mother, which, I am nearly certain, was neither charged nor paid for.

"Chapley says it is for our interest to keep him if he doesn't take more than fifty dollars worth, in the course of the year; but I can't reconcile it to my conscience to being instrumental in exposing a young man to temptations I know he can't withstand, even if I could be sure we should be large gainers by his dishonesty,—I will call it by no other name,—in the end. I shall dismiss him, and advise him to go into some other employment, where he will be less likely to be led astray. So you see, Ellen, I have not made shipwreck of my integrity, or delivered myself up, body and soul, to the evil spirit of mammon; and yet, the life I am leading does me no good. The worry and harassments I every day go through is telling,—I feel it, but cannot prevent it,—not only on my health but on my disposition; I am becoming irritable, selfish, and in a measure indifferent to the wants of others. If a poor shivering wretch comes to me, now, with the old story of want and penury, I throw him a trifle, meaning to enquire into the truth of his statement and give him further relief if I find him to be deserving, at the first opportunity; but it never comes; or, if it does, my head is so full of business plans and perplexities that there is no room for anything else. Dear me! I am in the maëlstrom of trade, and every circling wave but draws me deeper down. I sometimes wonder if nothing but death will release me from the giddy whirl."

"Oh, Laurence! don't talk so; you distress me. This life surely can't be good for you, or you would not be so gloomy; you never were so until you went into business, and I wish, with all my heart, you were well out of it. You must have some change, that is certain, or your health will fail entirely; I must

try and make Elvira feel this; I am sure she would rather live anywhere, and in any way, than see you suffer as you do."

"No; do not speak to her; she cannot endure the idea of moving from here; and, as it is so, I will not torment her and myself with useless persuasions on the subject, at least until she is stronger in health, or my affairs reach the crisis which compels our removal. I thank you all the same, however, for your kindness in making the proposal; and will say thus much, Ellen, that, whether or not the public decide you to be a rarely gifted woman, your nearest friends know you to be a rarely good one."

She knew him to be incapable of flattery, and her eyes lit with pleasure as aforetime at the words of approval, few and rare, he had occasionally addressed to her in childhood's happier days. That grateful, beaming look awakened in him olden memories, which had long slept, and, under their influence, he caught her hand in his own. Recollecting what she had deemed her absurd prudishness, in the affair of the curl he had once twisted about his finger, for a moment she allowed her hand to remain passive in his grasp; then, coloring deeply, she strove, with a resolute will, to withdraw it. Firmly he retained his hold, but yet as though hardly conscious of so doing; for the lines of his pale face were rigid with pain, and his eyes looked sorrowfully into the distance.

There was a hand on the door-knob; Ellen made a convul sive but ineffectual attempt to free herself, and Elvira stood the room.

"Look here, Mr. and Miss Bennett," she cried to her co panions, who were already in the doorway. "You see, needn't have hurried home for fear something had happen to him; there's nothing in the world the matter, only he rather come home and hold Ellen's hand than to stay an see whether his poor neglected wife got any supper; or whe ther she got home dead or alive; or whether she came a all, for that matter: that's no concern of *his*—O no, not th least, but Ellen must be looked after, of course. She might b lonesome here all by herself, so he leaves me, to come or sta

just as it happens, and hurries home to his waiting darling (*I* never asked her to sit up for us to this late hour of the night), who, I'll be bound, is ready enough to entertain him. Good Heavens! doesn't he seem more like *her* lover than *my* husband?"

Having worked herself up to this climax, the gentle, much-enduring Elvira burst into spiteful tears, which dried on her lashes before reaching her cheeks.

Ellen was speechless, her eyes painfully distended, and her face deadly pale, while her heart swelled nigh to bursting, with a sense of the cruel injustice and outrage against all decency and propriety to which she had been subjected.

Miss Bennett was also silent, but her look, if it did not "speak volumes," was at least good for a single terse and pointed paragraph, to this effect:

"So ho, this model of feminine delicacy and reserve, who turns such a deaf ear to all the sweet nothings of the drawing-room gallants, is not so much better than the rest of us, only a little more sly—doesn't object in the least to a snug little flirtation with her friend's husband, but does object most decidedly to being found out.

Mr. Bennett had assumed one of the most telling of his tragic attitudes, as who should say: "Ah! perfidy! thy name is woman."

The shock received by the poor somnambulist who is suddenly roused to a waking condition, by a dash of cold water in the face, could hardly exceed that experienced by Mr. Leroy at being thus summoned from a dream of the past, as it was and *as it might have been*, to the miserably real present. Elvira's sharp tones were so different from the sweet, soft notes thrilling on his spirit's ear, that for a minute he too was silent from actual bewilderment; then, to his mental vision all was clear, and a look of angry astonishment was quickly followed by one of stern reproval. There was a flash of crimson across his before pale face, a fiery kindling of the eyes, and every trace of emotion was gone. Deliberately, respectfully releasing the small hand that now lay

cold and passive in his own, with a calm and even haughty countenance, he crossed the room.

Something in his face induced Miss Bennett to suppress the witticism already trembling on her lips, and to assume an attitude of involuntary respect, as he approached her.

"I hope you have passed an agreeable evening," he coldly remarked.

"Thank you—rather so." And with a suppressed yawn she went away to her room.

It took but a single glance to bring Mr. Bennett down from his tragic stilts; and, with a good-night wave of the hand, he too disappeared.

Elvira, with furtive glances at her husband, still whimpered in a corner. He made no attempt to soothe her, but paced gloomily back and forth, from end to end of the room. This forced silence, following her own rash and taunting speech, filled her with a vague uneasiness: she strove to hide her misgivings under an air of assumed petulance.

"Dear me," she cried, "I wonder if nobody means to speak to me, now I have made out to get home! I'm tired and worried to death; why can't somebody put away my shawl, and take off my sandals?"

Ellen rose mechanically, in answer to this petulant summons, seeming, with her white rigidity of feature and eyes wide open, yet seeing nought they rested on, like one walking in a dream; but Mr. Leroy motioned her aside, as she would have approached his wife, saying, as he did so,

"I will attend to Mrs. Leroy's wishes, as I have already kept you up too late. I forgot myself: it was so pleasant to have any one take an interest in my business affairs—pleasant, because so rare," he added, in an accent of intense bitterness. "But I promise never to offend in the same way again."

He looked at her deprecatingly, but received no answering look in return. With pointed deference he held open the door for her as with a murmured "Good night," she passed from the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRONG-MINDED WOMAN.

Once in her own room, Ellen threw herself into a chair, and pressing her hands over her eyes, her whole frame shook with the emotion which thus far had found no vent in outward expression. Soon she grew more calm, and removed her hands, which were wet with tears.

"It is all of no use," she said, to herself, in a sort of despairing way; "I have borne and foreborne; my time has been as actually her own as though I had been a paid hireling; I could scarcely find an hour to call my own; my reading, excepting what has accidentally fallen to my lot in the drawing-room, has been confined to spare moments stolen from my needle's employ, or from time which should have been given to rest; my comfort has always yielded to hers; for her sake, I affected cheerfulness when I felt sad and full of unrest, and *this* is my reward—she mortifies and insults me, and that before others."

As she reverted, in thought, to the cause which had provoked this sudden outburst of jealous ire, she could almost have found it in her heart to be seriously angry, as vexed she certainly was, at Mr. Leroy for his share in the affair; but as she called to mind the shadow as of coming evil, which day by day grew deeper on his brow, her resentment rapidly cooled. "He needs sympathy," she mentally continued, "but Elvira has put up a bar of restraint between us which I cannot overpass; so, I must wound him by a show of coldness and indifference to his affairs, which I shall never really feel. *Never* can I forget that he saved my life, nor how different that life might have been but for his generous care."

For a short time she thus communed with herself, and derived what consolation she might from reflecting that she was wholly undeserving of the reproaches Elvira had cast upon her, and that the best of persons *were liable* to misconstruction and injustice.

She even reproached herself with allowing her own paltry and insignificant troubles to make her forgetful of the life-and-death struggle with want and disease she had that day witnessed; and resolved, as sleep was out of the question, to go back to the parlor for the unfinished newspaper article left on the table there, and complete the first rough copy before going to bed, that she might the sooner have it in her power to relieve the necessities of the poor widow and her family.

Opening the door, leading through a narrow passage to the parlor, she paused, nailed to the threshold by an emotion beyond her control, called up by the sound of Mr. Leroy's voice, not loud, but in the deep tones of indignant reproof. He must have been much moved to have forgotten the freedom from excitement, and contradiction even, which the physician had pronounced of vital importance to his wife's health.

"I will endure anything and everything, for myself," he said, "rather than provoke family strife, but I cannot, and will not, endure insult to one who deserves better things at your hands."

Ellen did not wait to hear the conclusion of Elvira's angry retort. Softly closing the door, she went back to her chair with a fresh burden at her heart. Was she to remain and become the bone of contention between this married pair, whose happiness she would sacrifice so much to secure? "Heaven forbid!" was the fervent mental response. A determination to leave Loramont's was the work of an instant. But where to go? *this* was not so easy to decide. There was something almost appalling to Ellen in the thought of going forth amongst utter strangers, with none to say—"Why do you so?"

She had not yet been taught by stern necessity that calm reliance on her own resources which nothing else can teach.

It is no fictitious heroine of romance, or strong-minded woman capable of battling right *manfully* for her own rights, who kindly *sits* to me for her portrait; but one of those gentle beings who, without noise or pretence, all unconsciously to themselves gladden and brighten full many a home in our land.

Ellen had that clinging sort of dependence, that desire of looking up to some one for guidance, which in these days of female

orators and politicians is fast becoming obsolete, and will, I fear me, go far toward exposing my acknowledged favorite to a charge of weak-mindedness and puerility, quite unworthy the aspiring womanhood of the present enlightened era. But truth must be told, despite the sneers of those who scout the old poetical conceit likening woman to the graceful swaying vine upheld by the sturdy oak, which, in turn, it beautifies and adorns. Why should *she* be a vine?—a mere creeping, fawning parasite? Why occupy longer a position inferior to that held by the self-styled "lords of creation?"

Down goes her gauntlet, and uttering a shrill disclaimer against longer submitting to such degradation, she valiantly contends for the *right* of breasting life's roughest storms, which a tyrannical sex, with an insulting contempt for her supposed weakness, has hitherto persisted in encountering alone. Why should she not be permitted to bronze the fair cheek which the world's poet aforetime declared "the winds of heaven may not visit too roughly?"

Resigning the divinely appointed office of cherisher, consoler, and help-meet to man, she boldly proclaims herself in all respects his equal; and casting aside the veil of womanly reserve, and all the tenderer graces which are her true crown and sceptre, undauntedly enters the lists, and dares the astounded knight of chivalry, who would fain bow to her charms if not appalled by her prowess, to the fierce conflict of—opinion.

I am here reminded of the memorable saying of that old world sage, Kpniltchintsinwang, who, after listening to a wordy lecture, in which woman's right to participate in all manly avocations was set forth with a greater show of zeal than reason, thus delivered himself:

"Beware, O tender and delicate vine, that, in seeking to untwine the loving tendrils that bind thee to the strong-hearted oak, thou fallest not to the earth, and art not only sorely bruised, but unable to lift thyself again to the embrace of the strong arms which have not only screened thee from the sunshine and sheltered thee from the storm, but braved the fiery lightning's flash, and the angry howl of the tempest, while thou wert safe from harm."

Knowing this long digression to be unpardonable, I proceed, without troubling the reader with apologies.

Ellen remained many minutes with her head on her hand, *where to go* being still the burden of her thoughts. Possibly she might be able to hire a room, if one should be found vacant, in the old wooden house where she had so long found a home. This would surely be better than going amongst strangers in a strange place.

Then came to mind the remembrance of the unspeakable dreariness of those wearily lagging days she had spent alone, while Mr. Leroy was away on his wedding journey.

"It will be very different now," she said to herself; "with my pen for companionship, and Mrs. Ames to look after every day, I shall not lack objects of interest."

When, at last, Ellen succeeded in possessing herself of her writing materials from the parlor, she found herself no longer capable of using them. The current of thought, too deeply ruffled to subside easily to its former smooth, clear flow, reflected but broken and distorted images, of which she could make nothing; so, in sleep she sought and found, for a time, relief from every care.

Long before the tardy sun, she was up, and writing rapidly by the dim light of her night-lamp. When the breakfast gong sounded, her first newspaper article was finished and neatly folded away.

She wished she might have been excused, this once, from going down to breakfast alone with Mr. Leroy; but dreading to provoke remark by departing from her ordinary habit of action, she hastened out to the parlor in time to meet him there.

He was more than usually kind in manner, but also more than usually distant and respectful.

Ellen was also conscious that, although struggling to appear perfectly at ease, she succeeded but indifferently; and that there was a something of coldness and stiffness in her own manner, which she would hardly have done away with if she could. All the time they were at breakfast-table, although attentive to the supply of her wants, Mr. Leroy scarcely opened his lips to speak a word.

Instead, however, of leaving her in the hall, as he was in the habit of doing, he accompanied her back to the parlor.

"You must not leave us," he abruptly began; "I was afraid that would be your first impulse, and as soon as I saw you this morning, I knew it. Am I not right?"

"I think it will be best for us all that I should go. You and Elvira will be sufficient for each other; and, now that Mr. Trueburn will take my scribblings off my hands, I hope and trust I shall be able to support myself."

"You know nothing about it," he replied, hastily. "You will not always feel like writing, and think what drudgery it will be, when you do not. As Scott says, Literature is a passable staff, but not to be relied on as a crutch; and I should be sorry to see you trusting to it solely for a maintenance. I am not wholly unselfish, however (people never are), in desiring you to remain. Elvira, who likes you at heart, however unjust she may be at times, cannot get along without you. You cannot write all the time, and it is only when weary of your pen that you need see either of us. As for myself, I shall be obliged to spend most of my evenings at the store, for the present, so, if you leave Elvira, she will be quite alone. Promise me you will remain, Ellen."

"I would rather not promise; I would, indeed, Mr. Leroy."

"Which means that you are fully resolved to go. How long is it that you acquired this admirable decision of character, which enables you thus to dispense with the approval of friends, and trust wholly to the dictates of your own superior judgment? It is not every woman who is strong-minded enough to go in direct opposition to all advice, and make her way alone in the world—no thanks to anybody. But stop! perhaps the new friend to whom you owe so much, is more fortunate than myself as an adviser."

At this pointed allusion to Mr. Trueburn, Ellen's eyes flashed through the tears already gathered there, as she said:

"O, Mr. Leroy! this is worse than unkind, it is cruelly unjust."

"*Mr. Leroy*," he iterated; "I beg your pardon. I stand re-

buked for my presumption in venturing to address Miss Verne as simply, Ellen—for daring to display towards her that brotherly familiarity to which I was fool enough to think our long acquaintance and some trifling show of kindness on my part lent a sanction. I have the honor to wish you a very good morning, Miss Verne."

With a low and formal obeisance, he strode out of the room leaving Ellen not ill-disposed to laugh and cry in the same breath—to laugh at his absurdity and cry at his anger.

"How changed!" she said to herself; "he would not have spoken to me in this way once. Better coldness and formality on his part than another scene like that of last night." This was but a cold crumb of comfort to console herself withal, but she made the most of it, and under its influence became composed, at least in manner.

After tapping twice at the door of Elvira's room, Ellen turned the latch, and asked permission to enter. No answer. She crossed the threshold, but Elvira did not even reply to her morning salutation. Sooth to say, she looked cross and sullen enough; and her countenance gave small indications of that liking for Ellen, of which Mr. Leroy had seemed so well assured. Her manner said plainly, "If you have come, in expectation of receiving any apology from *me*, you'll find yourself quite mistaken." But Ellen expected nothing of the kind. Her first feeling of resentment had already had time to cool, and a disposition to strife was foreign to her nature. She never cherished feelings of rancor or ill-will to any, believing that they who harbor anger and malevolence in their hearts, do *themselves* a grievous wrong, cankering the whole moral being, and poisoning the fount of *their own* happiness.

"I am going to see the poor woman you were too busy to hear about, last evening," said Ellen, "and I came in to see if I could do anything for you before I go out."

"Nothing, I thank you," frigidly said Elvira.

"Very well, then I can start at once." And Ellen turned to leave.

"I am half dead with the headache," cried Elvira, in a pe-

lant tone, as Ellen was closing the door; "but nobody thinks of pitying any one in the same house with themselves; but just take some miserable old beggars, way off, the Lord knows where, and their case must be attended to, blow high or low."

"Shall I bathe your head?" asked Ellen, in a voice that was like oil to the troubled waves of Elvira's temper.

"Mercy! no; I don't want my pillow all slopped up with water or cologne.

"I should like a cup of clear tea, if I could get it, and a mouthful of something to eat."

Ellen went down to the deserted breakfast-room, whence she soon returned with tea and toast. Under the potent influence of these auxiliaries, Elvira thawed considerably; proving that she was very nearly restored to her accustomed good-humor by communicating to Ellen the agreeable fact of having received from Miss Bennett an invitation to accompany her to a concert, on the evening of the next day, and requesting Ellen, before that time, to make a new ball-fringe for her opera-hood.

"She could not really have meant what she said, last night," thought Ellen, "or she would not so soon have forgotten words I wish I could drive from my own memory as easily."

When, bonneted and shawled, Ellen stept into the corridor, the first person she saw was Mr. Trueburn, descending from an upper staircase. The hearty cordiality with which he greeted her was really refreshing, after all the morning's vexations.

"When is that first contribution to be commenced?" he asked bluntly, as was his wont.

"It is already finished," she replied, brightening under his cheery glance.

"So soon? well done! I will wait here until you bring it to me."

She was gone but a minute, and, returning, placed in his hands a couple of large and closely written sheets. He unfolded them, and ran his eyes over the manuscript, as if to calculate the probable number of printed columns it would make.

"You can't have slept much since I saw you," he remarked,"

smilingly, on completing this inspection. "Well, I must cash your draft as I promised."

He handed her a five-dollar bill.

"I have no smaller bills," said Ellen, blushing at this acknowledgment of poverty to one so nearly a stranger.

"I can change the five for smaller bills if you would prefer them," he rejoined, reddening slightly.

"What I mean is, that this is too much for what cost me so little trouble," said the embarrassed Ellen.

"I see I must still play the part of literary censor; my advice to you now is, never reject the gifts the gods accord."

She no longer scrupled to retain the sum given by this generous editor for her first contribution to his paper.

More fair and sweet, how scant soever they may be, are the first fruits of literary labor than all the after gains of genius recognized and matured. At least, thus thought Ellen, as, with attitude almost triumphant, and an unconscious smile on her lips, she looked down at the prettily designed vignette of the unsoiled bank-note she held in her hand.

Mr. Trueburn had put back his porte-monnaie, and drawn on his gloves, but still he lingered. The expression of Ellen's face had recalled to his mind the feeling of exultation with which, as a boy, he had received the first earnings of his pen, with the joyous conviction that he was now fairly on the high-road to manly independence; and he now asked himself if *womanly* independence were an object less worthy of achievement. The face before him, a-glow with the fire of a lofty impulse, was sufficient answer.

But another pair of eyes, that Ellen wot not of, were sharply watching her every movement. These belonged to a sour-visaged chamber-maid, who, as she cleaned the shades of the hall-lamps, peered forth from her obscure post of observation, and made her own comments on everything that came within range of her prying vision. In her eagerness to lose nothing of what was passing, she unwittingly bent so far forward as to upset her box of polishing powder, that fell to the floor with a clang that arrested Ellen's startled notice. Grown sensitive since last

night's experience, she felt, as she caught a furtive glance of the inquisitive Abigail, that in an hour's time the entire kitchen cabinet would have an accurate description of the dress and appearance of the lady boarder who had received money from a gentleman in the corridor. Her face tingled with blushes, at thought of the misrepresentations and indignities she might again be called upon to endure. Innocence is not *always* its own reward.

Almost coldly she returned Mr. Trueburn's parting bow, and abruptly turned away from him.

"I will not stay here," she said to herself, while going down stairs. She repeated the words as she passed into the street. Then, as she went her way, her mind was full of plans for the future. That on which she dwelt longest, as in every way most practicable, was, to hire a room in her old home, if one was to be found untenanted, and support herself by her pen. Lost in self-communings, and heedless of her steps, mechanically she pursued her way. Suddenly a pair of strong arms were thrown about her; she was drawn back from under the very noses of a pair of glossy, high-stepping steeds, and a full-toned bass voice said, half humorously and half sternly:

"You must not indulge in day-dreamings at street-crossings, Miss Verne; it is dangerous to do it."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Trueburn," said Ellen, startled and confused; "but, really, I didn't observe—anybody—coming."

"You will find a better place to cross, farther down, at the next row of flag-stones," he said, rapidly, and adding something about being in haste, speedily disappeared around the nearest corner.

Thus admonished to have her wits about her, Ellen proceeded at a quickened pace, under the vague impression that Mr. Trueburn was to be the good genius of her life. Somehow, this impression made her feel less desolate, in prospect of the isolated life so soon to be hers. Who does not long to be an object of interest to some few friends?

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BENEVOLENT MRS. GURDY AND HER POOR LODGERS.

AGAIN the pale, dwindling plants, in their slime-coated flower-pots, excited in Ellen's breast that pitying sort of sympathy which is nearly akin to disgust. Her progress somewhat impeded by the numerous parcels she bore in her arms, laboriously she climbed up to Miss Grizzell's attic, and was rewarded for her pains by a fervent "God bless you, child, you're heartily welcome."

Although her own position was deplorable in the extreme, the poor washerwoman proved her unselfishness by making inquiries as to the welfare of the Ameses, instead of complaining of her own condition.

She was no longer able to crawl from the bed to the chair without assistance.

"God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," she said, with unshaken trust; "and he has raised me up a friend in my hour of sorest need. The poor woman who makes vests in the next room comes in and cooks me a bit of something to eat, and does a thousand things for me that I can't do for myself, while I sew for her; thank Heaven I have the use of my hands, now that my legs have failed me, and I shouldn't have anything to worry about, if I could only know the poor Ameses weren't suffering for the wherewithal to support life."

Having relieved her anxieties on this point, Ellen took leave, and, without any impediments from bolts or bars, made her way to the underground apartment she sought.

A huge rat *tore* across the room, and scrambled through a hole in the wall as she opened the door. This was evidently an event of no rare occurrence, as Mrs. Ames scarcely noticed it. She had looked pale and worn on the previous day, but morning showed her haggard even to ghastliness, the bright red spots on either cheek only rendering more conspicuous the pallor marking

the rest of her face. She was sitting behind the bed, her arm beneath the hard pillow on which rested her son's head. He was asleep; not in the refreshing slumber of health, for he was full of a strange moaning restlessness; and he tossed his arms about, while his fingers gave little convulsive grasps at the torn coverlet—those claw-like hands and thin, shrivelled arms seeming almost grotesque and horrible, in contrast with the full, bloated face of the sleeper.

Mrs. Ames greeted her guest with a sickly smile; Ellen felt she was no longer looked upon as an intruder. The little girl was wide awake; and, as Ellen stooped to ask what she could do for her, she received the whispered reply—

"Something to eat, please."

Ellen set about lighting a fire, glad to find an armful of wood in the corner, although ignorant whence it came. But wood was not the only thing necessary for the accomplishment of her task. She had thoughtfully provided herself with matches, but there was neither paper nor shaving to be found.

The little Bessie beckoned to her.

"Take a handful of straw out of the bed—mamma does."

Acting on this hint, there was soon a bright flame on the hearth. Broiling a slice of steak, by holding it over coals on a fork, a basin of beef-tea was speedily prepared, a few spoonfuls of which satisfied the sick girl's craving for food.

After this, Mrs. Ames, no longer observant of what was passing about her, failed to recognize the fact that for her Ellen was now preparing breakfast. Sitting on the floor, her arm under the pillow, and her head resting against the blackened wall of the room, she dozed uneasily; exhausted nature would no longer be defrauded of its rights. It was not until Ellen had dexterously insinuated her own arm into the place occupied by that of Mrs. Ames, beneath the pillow, that the latter roused herself.

"Go and eat; it will give you strength," whispered Ellen.

"Will you tell me what to call you?" asked the widow, rubbing her heavy eyelids.

"My name is Ellen Verne; call me Ellen," was the reply.

"You are one of the few people, Ellen, from whom I can accept charity and not have it choke me."

She got up, but for a few moments was hardly able to stand, so benumbed were her limbs from the effects of the constrained posture she had maintained through a greater portion of the night. Crossing the room, she sat down in the chimney corner and rubbed her poor fingers over the fire. Pouring herself ou a cup of chocolate, she took the plate of toast Ellen had prepare for her, and seemed about to commence eating; then, droppin her knife and fork and bowing her head reverently, she mu mured aloud:

"Oh God! in affliction, Thou hast remembered mercy. W thank Thee for this our daily bread. Teach us to accept T bounty in the spirit that will be most acceptable to Thee."

Ellen, bending over the sick child, felt a choking sensation her throat, as she echoed the widow's prayer in her heart. Hs an hour went by before her sleeping charge awoke with a cry "Mamma."

The cry was instantly answered by her presence at his b side.

"Could you eat a bit of toast, Willie?"

He shook his head. "I couldn't swallow—hurts me speak."

"Can you think of anything you would like?"

"A scraped apple."

"Do you think it would hurt him, Ellen?" asked Mrs. Am

"I should think not," she replied; "but wouldn't you like consult a physician on the subject?"

The red spots deepened on her cheeks as, much moved, asked:

"Would the mother whose children were drowning before eyes, wish every means tried to save them? But what d tor would come to such a wretched hole as this?—without a too! I sometimes think my pride will kill me. I can die, I cannot beg—not even for my children's sake."

"There is no need," said Ellen, resuming her bonnet shawl with an assumption of cheerfulness she did not really f

More than she was herself aware, was she subject to external influences. A very humble home she could have made the abode of comfort and content; with wholesome air, sunshine, and cleanliness, common privations would hardly have been felt.—But here, an aspect of squalid misery was over everything; and the faces on which she looked bore the seal with which grim want stamps the features of its victims.

It was a positive pleasure to Ellen to see the clearer light, and breathe the purer air of the streets, after the gloomy darkness and foul atmosphere from which she gladly emerged. The thought of the length of time which this poor family had endured what so oppressed her, even for a single hour, filled her with sadness; she had so little in her power to do for them. As speedily as might be, she made her way to the residence of a physician, whom she knew by report as one always ready to attend the deserving poor.

Dr. Johnde, although very busy with a file of manuscript, only waited, after hearing Ellen's story, to hurry on his overcoat, before accompanying her back to Mrs. Ames'.

"This air is stifling; cannot a window be raised?" he asked, on entering the room.

"They are not made to be raised; you see, sir, they are but rows of single panes," replied Mrs. Ames.

He crossed the room quietly, and thrust his cane through a pane of glass, coolly remarking, "It will answer for a ventilator for want of a better, and keep your chimney from smoking, as well. If your landlord complains, send him to me, and I will deliver him up to the health committee, for daring to let such a fever-breeding dungeon as this."

Mrs. Ames looked distressed at this pointed allusion to the wretchedness of their abode. Ellen hastened to divert the doctor's attention from the so-called dungeon to the ailing children; into whose condition he enquired with a kindness and even tenderness of manner that won the confidence of his little patients, and went straight to the mother's heart. How anxiously she questioned him, and with what trembling eagerness awaited his replies! and yet, so cautiously were they worded, that she was

forced, after all, to confess to herself that it was rather from his calm cheerfulness of manner than from anything he had said that she derived encouragement.

Truly, physicians had need be wonderful adepts in the art of controling the facial muscles and even the modulations of the voice, so powerful an influence have the look and tone of the medical attendant on those who hang on his lips for words of life or death, awaiting his dictum with an agony of suspense, scarcely less endurable than that of the poor criminal awaiting his final sentence.

Dr. Johnde wrote a list of the few remedies he deemed requisite, in plain English, considerately remarking that Latin prescriptions were expensive in the purchase; and, after taking leave of the family, by a scarce perceptible motion beckoned Ellen out into the passage. Here he thought proper to be quite explicit.

"It is too late to do anything for the little boy," he began "there is nothing of him left to build up a new structure of health upon; let him have whatever he asks for. With pure air, wholesome food, and careful nursing, the little girl will soon be about, brisk as ever. As to Mrs. Ames, if those are hectic roses on her cheeks, I doubt if she lives to see the flowers bloom another summer: I know consumption well," and, as if unconsciously, he pressed his hand to his side and coughed. "Possibly, in her case, emaciation and fever flushes may be the effect of fatigue from continued watching. (I will sound her lungs next time I call.) She must have rest, and that immediately. Why don't her friend get her out of this horrid den, where the air is poison, and the very floor is mouldy from the stagnant water underneath?"

"I do not think she has any friends, excepting myself, able to help her; and my will is better than my ability."

Dr. Johnde put back the fee she tendered him, saying he must see what could be done for the family; but that he had so many claimants on his good offices it was but little he could do for each individual.

With a troubled look on her face, Ellen returned to the room and began putting on her bonnet and shawl.

"Do you leave us now ?" asked Mrs. Ames.

"Only to go for the medicines and Willie's apples," Ellen said, keeping her back to the questioner: she dreaded to meet the look of those to whose death-warrant she felt as though she had just been listening. She was softly closing the door after her, when it was drawn from her hand, and Mrs. Ames stood beside her in the passage. Very wan and white looked the widow's face, and her thin hands trembled as she clasped them together, with a searching glance at Ellen, who avoided her eye.

"Did he—did the doctor say anything I was not to be told ?" she asked in a hoarse whisper.

"He said," replied Ellen, concealing her own agitation as well as she was able, "that with proper care little Bessie will soon be well; isn't that encouraging ?"

"Encouraging, as far as it goes. But is only Bessie to get well ?"

Startled and discomposed by the question, Ellen was really relieved by her asking: "What of Willie ?" She had feared it was to her own health the widow's interrogatory had reference; and she shrank from assuming the responsibility of informing the poor woman that Dr. Johnde considered her case almost hopeless.

Taking courage on finding that only her son was in her thoughts, Ellen replied that Willie was to have whatever he asked for.

The widow's trembling ceased. Suspense no longer agitated her; certainty of what was to come calmed and subdued her.

"To have whatever he asks for! I know what that means," she said, a mighty sorrow struggling in her voice; for what grief is like that of the widowed mother called on to give back the son, who, in the order of nature, should become the prop of her declining years? Going to the bedside, her looks fastened on the features of her boy, with that indescribable yearning with which we have all, at one time or another, gazed on the dear loved face which we knew must soon be buried away out of our sight forevermore.

This was no time for words of sympathy; indeed, Ellen almost felt that the scene was too sacred to be gazed on by the eyes of a stranger; and, closing the door softly, went on her way, returning in due season.

"Now that Willie is asleep again," she said, laying aside the apple she had been scraping for him, and which he had much enjoyed, "you had better improve the opportunity, Mrs. Ames, by putting on my bonnet and shawl, and going out for a breath of air."

"I need rest, more than air," was the reply; and without another word she lay down across the foot of the bed. Ellen threw the shawl over her, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her soundly asleep.

The room would have been quite still, but for the occasional tread of passing feet on the sidewalk, or the rattle of a vehicle in the street.

Bessie was awake, but very quiet, gazing with a sort of fascination at the gentle, lovable face which threw her such kindly encouraging glances across her sleeping brother. At last she, too, dozed, and the stillness became almost oppressive.

Ellen felt a dull headache gradually coming on; for, notwithstanding the broken pane of glass, the air was damp and sluggish, like that of a vault. No wonder that illness had overtaken the little household, daily condemned to its noxious inhalation. If they could only be removed to a healthier location! But how was this to be effected? Certainly not by her own unaided exertions—at least, not immediately. She could not apply to Mr. Leroy, harassed as he was by business cares and perplexities, even if there had been no other reason to restrain her from so doing. There was Miss Pettigrew—but she had a new hobby, and had foresworn alms-giving, in disgust.

Clasping her hands, she murmured, in prayer—"O Thou, from whom comest all our mercies, bless the suffering and helpless poor!"

After this, she sat very still, for what seemed to her a long time. A faint sound attracted her attention. Through a hole in the corner opposite where she sat, the cunning, wicked, elfish

eyes of a large rat were cautiously peering. She strove to frighten him away, by waving her handkerchief towards him, but his sage ratship, maintaining a masterly inactivity during these signals, at their close, thrust a single fore-paw through the opening, preparatory to entering the room. Evidently he had not broken his fast, and was not inclined to despise the widow's modest fare.

Rolling her handkerchief into as hard a ball as the circumstances would admit, Ellen discharged it full in the face of her would-be guest, and had the pleasure of seeing him beat a hasty retreat. Surely, the most obtuse of morning callers must have taken so broad a hint. Time began to hang heavily on her hands; she wished for something to do.

Lucky thought! she has a pencil and a scrap of blank paper in her pocket, and commences jotting down the events of the morning. Years have gone by since then, but still this pencilled scrawl, written in the semi-darkness of the widow's gloomy room, is legible: barely so however, but, as my dear friend, Mrs.—Miss Verne, I mean (I had very nearly given a highly inartistic clue to my story's ending), says: "What could you expect of one who wrote on a four-inch bit of paper, with a stick of wood by way of writing-desk?"

But to return: Ellen was startled from her employment by a slight noise in the room, and raised her eyes in time to see a corner of her handkerchief disappearing in the afore-mentioned rat-hole. She revenged this predatory incursion of the enemy, by plugging up his only place of ingress with the pewter drinking cup; and thus his ratship was reduced to a state of siege—blockaded in his own stronghold.

Before she had time to resume her seat, there came a knock—not the gentle tap usually reserved for the sick-room—at the door: and, before Ellen had time to reach the same, it was opened from the outside by a woman who might be described as "fat and forty," but was most assuredly not "fair;" in short, not to put too fine a point on it, as the illustrious Micawber would say, her face was pimply, blotchy and gross, and her *frouzled* hair was scratched (wish I could say brushed or combed,

but really conscience won't permit) back under a cap which was none of the whitest with its soiled and dingy ribbons. She wore huge pendants in her ears, which displayed unsightly slits, torn down by the heavy drops.

"Good news," she cried, crossing the threshold, and as hastily retreating back into the passage, before Ellen's up raised finger, and gesture entreating silence.

"I'm sure I wouldn't have intruded, if I'd ha' known Mrs Ames had company, or a nurse, perhaps, though how she can afford it, and my rent not all square"—and the sentence was concluded by a grim look, meant to convey the idea of de frauded innocence.

"I am a friend," said Ellen, without quailing; "and only wish, for the sake of the poor family, that they ha more such."

"I am sure, so do I," rejoined the new-comer, with mollified visage; "that is, if they was of the right sort; f I can't afford to lose by my lodgers. I'm Mrs. Gurdy, course you've heard me spoken on, what owns the whole this building, at your service."

Ellen bowed distantly, without, of course, presuming introduce herself to the consequential proprietress of charming an abode. Mrs. Gurdy improved this gap in tl conversation, by sniffing violently at the closed thumb an firefinger of her right hand, after which, burying her nose a red cotton handkerchief, she drew therefrom sounds n exactly Æolian, but more nearly resembling the prolonge too-oo-oot of a lusty fishman's horn.

"You see, Miss," resumed this well-practiced performer c the nasal organ, "I'm nat'rally too generous to live; and might give away half my little savings, and even the ver bread out of my own mouth, there's no knowing, if my sens o' dooty to Almiry Jane didn't pervent me; for I'm a poo widder myself, and if I should be taken away, that poo slimpsy creetur would be thrown, a pitiless orphan, upon friendless and unprotected world."

A second time, the widow converted her nose into a wi

instrument of greater power than sweetness, and then waxing impatient, muttered—

"I do wish Mrs. Ames would wake up, for this damp air makes my asthma bad; and I don't like to resk my neck coming down them steep stairs too often, on Almiry Jane's account, you know. I'd have a new flight put in to-morrow, I'm of sech an obligin' turn o' mind, if 'twan't for my dooty to lay by what little I can for that poor, innocent dear, that don't know the value of money no more than a year-old baby. But, as I was going to say, I come down to tell Mrs. Ames, (perhaps you will tell her when she wakes up) that a strange gentleman, he wouldn't tell his name, has been and hired the room overhead for her; and, what's better, he's paid down a month's rent in advance.

The look of abstracted indifference Ellen's face had thus far worn, here gave place to an expression of eager interest and attention.

"Could you let me see the room, Madam?" she asked, in a joyous accent at this unexpected good fortune for those she already called friends.

She found the room to be even more pleasant than she could have ventured to hope.

"I offered to let the flower-pots stay in the window, at the same price, but the gentleman wouldn't have 'em at no rate," said Mrs. Gurdy, adding some disparaging remarks in regard to his lack of taste.

Ellen had her own opinion on this subject, which she wisely kept to herself, while glancing successively at the newly painted floor, bright and clean, the prettily turned bedstead, with its cotton mattress and patch counterpane, and the small, neat cooking-stove, with the shining covers of its boilers and stew-pans.

Mrs. Gurdy was vulgarly loud and pompous in extolling the many conveniences of the apartment.

"There is a large closet, Miss; so handy! look! This wood, and butter, and flour, the strange gentleman sent in. Mrs. Ames may thank me for it all; he never would have

known what to buy, if I hadn't put him up to the right thi by telling him what she needed most. I'm a'most out of fi myself; and she's been dretful behind-hand with her re sometimes; and I've had to take all sorts of old traps, payment, that another woman wouldn't have looked at; b my feelinks is powerful strong, and if I've got a failing in t world, it's being too open-handed to the poor. I only ho Mrs. Ames will bear in mind that one good turn deserv another. When her wood is out, all I've got to do is to je let the stranger know it, (*she's* too proud like to let on ho poor she is herself,) and he'll send her some more; for he good as said that he'd provide for her till she was w enough to provide for herself. I wish he'd take me und his wing, in the same way, but, Lord! I was never one the fortunate kind."

To say that Ellen had no curiosity about this mysterious str ger, whose bounty came in a moment so opportune that it most seemed a special act of Providence, would be untrue; b her curiosity was feeble as compared with the depth of gratitu with which her heart overflowed toward the "Giver of all goc for His tender mercies to His people. Very glad was she wh the loud-voiced landlady thought proper to withdraw.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALMIRY JANE.—WILLIE'S GLEAM OF SUNSHINE.

Left by herself, Ellen carefully dusted the simple furnit and ranged it round the room. Then she found that only grime on the window panes remained to suggest the idea of cleanliness, and its attendant train of discomfort. Taking wash-basin from the sink, and filling it from the boiler on stove, she was speedily engaged, with a will, in window cleani As the thought of the gladness she was helping to bring

wretched family below, her heart sang within her, and little gushes of melody sprang to her lips. The sun rested lovingly in her yellow tresses, and glanced aslant her fair rounded arms. Despite her deformity, she was very graceful. Is woman ever more lovely than when engaged in the discharge of those domestic offices which are better for the health than tonics, or than cosmetics for the complexion?

Ellen felt amply rewarded for her labor as she noted the brighter and sunnier aspect the room seemed to wear; and now she thought it time to see how matters were progressing below stairs.

The door on the opposite side of the entry opened, just as she was entering the hall, and Mr. Trueburn issued therefrom. A look of mutual surprise, followed by some little embarrassment on his side, and, courteously raising his hat, he left the house.

How strange it seemed to meet one of the boarders from Laramont's in such a lodging-house as this! but Ellen had no time for the indulgence of idle curiosity, and hastened down stairs. In the widow's room everything was as she had left it. Noiselessly carrying into the passage, one by one, the few articles worth removing to the room above, she, not without considerable trouble, got them up the narrow, *shaky* staircase, and into their new quarters, where she was busily arranging them, when the door flew open with a bang, and a stout, well-grown lad burst into the room, depositing on the wood-box a basket of potatoes and a pair of fowls.

"Be you Miss Ames?" he asked, wiping the sweat from his red face.

"Only a friend of Mrs. Ames; but this is her room."

"All right! you'll jest keep an eye to these fixin's till Miss Ames gits 'em, will ye?"

Ellen signified her readiness to take charge of the articles in question.

"Sorry to trouble ye," continued the provision dealer's lad, with an attempt at politeness; "but, if you're a going to live in the same house with that Gurdy woman, you'd better keep your eye peeled, I tell *you*. She'll bear looking after, a good deal.

She used to buy all her provisions of us; and Mr. Hardy, that's my boss, couldn't never get a cent of his pay out of the old critter, because, ye see, this house and furniture all belongs to that dead-an'-alive spindle-shanks of an Almiry Jane. So, when Mr. Hardy found he wa'n't never like to get anything out of her, he told her, as polite as you please, that he had made up his mind to sell low for cash; so, ever after that, she never went by the store without dropping in to buy a beet or a turnip—about a cent's worth, ye know—jest for the sake of makin' me tote from way beyond Boylston-market clear over to this jumping-off place. Didn't I use to bark my shins most awful a divin' behind the onion barrels every time I see her homely old mug a comin' down the street? Scissors! how tender shins is!

"Everybody up our way knows her like a book, and wouldn't trust her for a wooden nutmeg. Always wanting a sample of sugar, and a sample of tea! why, she lived on samples till folks found her out. Mayn't I help you with that box, Miss? it's too heavy for you to move."

Ellen graciously accepted the proffered aid, and thus his tongue ran glibly on:

"But the way she used to get her flour was the greatest of all. She'd order a barrel to be sent here, and, after keeping it a day or two, she'd send back word that it didn't suit, wasn't good enough, perhaps, and they might send and git it, for she wouldn't have it. Wal, when the barrel got back to the store it generally weighed from ten to twelve pounds less than when it went out of it, and she ready to swear herself black in the face that she hadn't taken out but the least bit of a sample, jest to try the quality, ye know. Of course, it was too small a matter to go to law about; and she got her bread cheap till the flour dealers all found her out. There she was, in the back passage when I come along, jest now; waitin' o' purpose for me, as like as any way, and screechin' like mad for me to bring the thing round the back way. Didn't she think I was green?"

He had an opportunity of proposing this query to Mrs. Gurdy who entered the room at this juncture, confronting the audacious stripling with looks of black displeasure. Nowise daunted, he

looked in her face with a grin of defiance, and, glancing significantly at the basket and its contents, he was off in a twinkling.

"That boy is a lying, impotent ragamuffin; and he's no more manners than a wild, whoopin' caterwaul," said the irate widow, in great wrath.

Ellen did not feel called upon to make any response to this; contenting herself with a simple feeling of wonderment as to whether a search through a zoological exhibition, or one into a treatise on feline vocalization, would be more likely to enlighten her as to the exact nature of the "wild, whooping caterwaul." The widow's anger speedily went out, from lack of fuel. She took up the chickens from the top of the basket, and examined them with a critical eye.

"Mrs. Ames may thank me for these too," she said, with what she intended for a benignant air.

Ellen was silent: the presence of this woman was beginning to be hateful to her. Creeping over her, came that indescribable feeling of oppression we have all suffered in the presence of natures wholly antagonistic to our own.

"Says I to the strange gentleman," resumed Mrs. Gurdy, toying with the wing of a fowl; "says I, the whole family is all run down, and wants something to bring 'em up agin; and, accordin' to my notions, a little chicken broth, with a bit of mashed potater, is jest the thing for 'em; and that reminds me that Almiry Jane is kind of ailin' to-day; and there's no knowin' but a bowl of broth might set her up wonderful. I declare, I can't think what makes the poor thing so weakly like. I'm sure she ha'n't never done no hard work to hurt her. No, says I to Silas, when he wanted to set her to washing dishes and the like, and to buy her a hoop and let her go a rompin' about with all the rag-tag-and-bobtail in the streets; no, says I, I'll never let our only daughter git tanned and freckled up, the way I did when I was a girl (all the thousand flowers in the world won't take it off), but she shall be white and delikit-lookin', like a gentleman's daughter; and she shall have a fust rate edication, so that she can hold up her head with the best on 'em; and I mean

she shall. Eight hours a day she spends studyin' an' recitin' at a tip-top school. I never let her walk: I don't want her to git acquainted with no low people in the streets, so she rides back-'ards and for'ards in an omlibus. I'm very perticklar never to let her git acquaintid with my poor lodgers, though I have hard work to pervent it sometimes, for the girl ha'n't no sense about some things.

"She devotes most of her time to the what-ye-may-call-'em, the defunct—no, *dead* languages, because Madam Pompoleany, one of the school-marms, says they are more uncommon, distangay, that's her word, than the live ones. I guess she's more'n half right, for I studied the French phrase-book once myself, and I don't know as I've been thought any more on, on that account. *Parley voos Francis, Maddezmoysell?*"

Ellen bit her lips. Attributing her silence to an ignorance rather to be pitied than condemned, with a sigh of self-importance, the widow thus went on, although Ellen stood holding the door-knob in her hand, impatient to be gone:

"Then comes four hours practicin' on the pianner, for her drawin' and paintin' lessons are taken at school, nothin' but music for her to attend to here."

"I should think, interposed Ellen, that a little recreation, in doors or out, would——"

But Mrs. Gurdy did not heed the interruption, or rather there was none, for, once mounted on her favorite hobby, away she galloped, not caring a pin whether she ran down, or ran over, the opinions of others.

"Sometimes I think Almiry Jane might show a little more gratitude than she does, for all I've did for her; but then 't'aint good breedin' to make a fuss about anything, and, as nigh as I can make out by watching the big-bugs, 'tis good-breedin' to sowzle about in a die-away kind of a style, and turn up a body's nose at everything that smells of the commoner sort o' people. But I won't complain, if she only takes the high position in society I'm edicatin' on her for; it's all I ask.

"I guess I might as well take a few of these 'ere potaters, for that strange gentleman hendered me so about Mrs. Ames' affairs

that I shan't have time to go to the provision-store, before dinner; and she won't need more than one of them fowls; I can pay her for the one I take, unless she should insist on my keeping it, to make up for any little backwardness in her rent, which, of course, she will do. On the whole, you needn't say anything to her about it; for she's as particular in little punctilyos as though she was a real lady, instead of a half-starved pauper as she is. Not that I owe her any grudge though, on account of her holding her head so high; I'm sure I would have been glad to have spared her a crust, now and then, if it hadn't been for my dooty to my poor fatherless child. 'My heart is open as the day to meltin' charity,' as that great Scotch barnd, Sir Ben Jonsing, be-u-tifully remarks in one of his elegant poims."

With this admirable display of erudite literary lore, Mrs. Gurdy thought proper to retire, leaving Ellen much disgusted, and not a little indignant, at the petty larceny she felt it would be useless to attempt preventing. Carefully groping her way to the lower regions, she found the widow on her knees upon the hearth, trying with her breath to kindle the smouldering embers into a flame. Not until Ellen's hand touched her shoulder did she raise her head.

"I give you joy, Mrs. Ames; you are not to stay in this unwholesome place another hour."

The widow seemed scarcely to comprehend this pleasant bit of intelligence, but gazed at Ellen with eager and painful bewilderment. The latter explained, in a cheery way, that the room overhead had been hired for her, and the rent paid for a month in advance.

For a moment, the widow was silent with great joy, then murmuring,

"It confuses me to hear any one speak in such a tone, and with such a look *here*," she bowed her head on her hand and wept. Ellen passed her hand over the bowed head, as though it had been that of a tired child.

"It is through your doings, I know, that this good fortune has come to us," said the widow brokenly, and without looking up.

"No," said Ellen, quietly, "it is all through the kindness of a stranger; I first heard of it from Mrs. Gurdy."

"Mrs. Gurdy!" And the widow raised her head, while her white face assumed that cold, hard look it had worn when Ellen first saw her. "If it is through Mrs. Gurdy, you may be sure no good will come of it. Do you know, needy as I am, I would rather take a blow, than a favor, from that woman any day.- She has taken advantage of my necessities to get all my clothing and furniture, bit by bit, for half its actual value. It was only yesterday," and the widow's voice sank to a hoarse whisper- "only yesterday that I gave up my feather bed rather than be beholden to her; and now, if there is any balance of obligation it is in my favor. Shall I ever forget her telling me that it would be almost a mercy if Willie and Bessie were to be taken away, for I could easily support myself if freed from them?- Think of that; and she a mother! I prayed then, Heaven forgive me! that if the children were taken, I might not be left behind. I wished the long struggle with pain, and want, and sore heart-sickness, were well over, and we three sleeping in the paupers' grave, if so it must be. When you first came, I did not mean to let you in. I had found Mrs. Gurdy so pitiless, I almost dreaded the face of my kind."

"That is all over now; let us leave the dark past to itself and look forward to the brighter future," said Ellen with determinate cheerfulness. "As to Mrs. Gurdy, she has had no more hand in engaging the room for you, up stairs, than I have; I do not even know the name of the stranger whose generosity proves the interest he takes in your welfare. Come, don't let us stay in all this smoke, when there is a bright fire waiting up stairs."

Ellen looked about her for a lamp, or some such means of lighting the dark staircase, as a misstep thereon, with a child in her arms, might prove no small mishap, but looked in vain; there was not so much as a candle's end to be found. Oh! the long and dreary hours these poor creatures had spent in utter darkness and desolation!

"Put your arms round my neck, Bessie, and I'll carry you very carefully; never fear, I'll not let you fall."

The grateful child kissed Ellen's cheek, as she clung about her neck, whispering, "I wish you would stay here always; things have been growing better ever since you came."

"Not here, dear, please Heaven, we'll never come into this room again, either of us." And Ellen smiled down upon the little wan face and soft, loving eyes upraised to her own.

"Now let us rest a minute, please, it was so hard getting up the broken stairs that always shake so."

Nothing loath, Ellen rested with her living burden, on the threshold of the door opening into the hall, drawing the shawl more closely about the head and chest of the sick girl.

"How good this air is," said Bessie, breathing it in, in long draughts, as though it had been some delicious aroma.

The outer door of the hall was wide open, and in it was standing a tall, lean, sallow-faced girl of fourteen or fifteen, wistfully eyeing a merry group of young persons, nearly of her own age, who were enjoying a brisk game at battledoor in an opposite arch-way. Her shoulders were narrow and drooping, her chest hollow, and her arms of the true walking-stick type.

"Almiry Jane," screeched a shrill voice, from over the bannister above, "what are you about, child? I don't hear the pianner a-goin', and you know Monshure Borysalt will be here in half an hour."

The dutiful daughter turned herself about, with a dreary sigh, and listlessly sauntered into the room opposite the one to be occupied by Mrs. Ames.

"That is our landlady's daughter; I know her by sight, but she never speaks to us," whispered Bessie. "She always has enough to eat, and nice clothes to wear, but I wouldn't like to be she."

"Why not, Bessie?"

"I wouldn't like to change mammas with her. Mrs. Gurdy makes Elmira cry, sometimes and mamma never does me: I only cry with pain."

"Hush, a minute, dear."

It was the poor victim of maternal ambition, who, in a lifeless monotone, mechanically drawled forth "One, two, three—one, two, three," while she laboriously hammered out a dismal waltz, which might have been a funeral dirge, for all the life and sprightliness it expressed.

"Almiry Jane, are you going to sleep over the pianner?—Wake up, and that quick too, or I'll be there, Miss," a second time screeched the voice over the bannister, in a sharp tone of menace.

"One, two—one, two," rapidly counted the frightened Elmira, with a desperate essay at executing a strange, up-and-down, topsy-turvey sort of a polka, the brilliant passages of which she rendered in such unintelligible jargon, that no one but a puppet on wires, or a lunatic in a fit of the St. Vitus's dance, could have actually polked to such mad measures, without danger of dislocating every limb in his body.

"Be-u-tiful," cried the enchanted mother; "that sound something like, now; only keep it up that way, and I shall feel paid for all your music has cost me."

Alas, for thee, Elmira! I fear no amount of persuasion will ever induce thee to look upon Beethoven or Mendelssohn as benefactors to their race.

It was a joy to Ellen, as she laid the slight form of Bessie on the bed, to see the child's look of eager delight, as she cried out "Look, mamma; there is the blue sky; isn't it nice to see the dear, the *darling* blue sky?"

But Willie's smile, as he spread his meagre, claw-like hands in the sunlight streaming in through the uncurtained window, made her sad: it was like a gleam of sunshine falling athwart a tomb, only to make more visible the sharp tracery of death, and the near grave.

Oh, the dread mystery of life! The great black pall shutting out the immortal radiance, which, Faith tells us, is beyond; but woe's me! never shall the dull ear of mortal, though strained to its utmost tension, catch the faintest echo of "the golden gates on harmonious hinges turning."

Thus thought Ellen, as she looked at the death-doomed child

so pleased with the light of that sun which so soon, for him, would cease to shine forevermore. She turned to meet the eyes of the mother, which were already dim with the shadow of coming bereavement.

"I think you need me no longer, and I will leave you now," said Ellen in a subdued tone.

"You have done a great deal for me, and I feel it," said Mrs. Ames; "and if I ever have it in my power, I will gladly return your kindness. I don't half say what I mean; even now I cannot stoop to humble, cringing thanks. I think *you* will not require it of me."

"I require nothing of you," said Ellen, speaking very softly; "I am only too thankful to be permitted to forget my own little trials in attempting to relieve those which are really worthy the name. I hope to be with you soon again."

Without a word, Mrs. Ames grasped the hand held out by Ellen, and little Bessie's eyes, as Ellen bent over her for a good-bye kiss, were eloquent of entreaties for a speedy return.

CHAPTER XIX.

NOT WANTED—BLUE-STOCKINGISM.

On leaving Mrs. Gurdy's, Ellen directed her steps to their former home in Wry Lane.

It seemed strange to ring the bell, instead of opening the door with a latch-key and entering at once, as had been formerly her custom.

A prim and somewhat antiquated damsel, with a painful hesitancy in her speech, and a chill and formal mannerism in her whole appearance, made herself visible, and stammered forth an inquiry as to Ellen's business.

"I believe it is Miss Ruggles to whom I have the pleasure of speaking," Ellen asserted rather doubtingly, for she had obtained

but transient glimpses of their eccentric landlady in all the years they had dwelt under the same roof with her. Indeed, so shy had she been of meeting her lodgers, that she had taken every precaution to avoid so doing; even going so far as to slip Mr. Leroy's rent-bills under his door, with the written request that he would deposit the amount thereof in a closed box on the entry-table.

Miss Ruggles gave a stiff little bow, in answer to Ellen's observation.

"I wish to speak with you a few moments, if you are at leisure."

"Well, I am very busy," replied Miss Ruggles, fidgeting with her knitting-sheath; "but I can wait a *few moments* if you've anything particular to say."

"May I come in, then? You will be apt to take cold standing in this chill wind."

The faded spinster looked half inclined to shut the door in her visitor's face; but after a second resort to her knitting-sheath, requested Ellen to enter, leading her unwelcome guest through the old-fashioned hall, which she had just time to remark had much improved in appearance during her absence, into the smallest and neatest of sitting-rooms. The floor was nearly covered with braided rugs, on one of which lay a blind cat and a superannuated poodle, in drowsy companionship.

In obedience to a look from Miss Ruggles, warning her to be as expeditious as possible, Ellen hastened to make known the object of her call, by asking if either of the rooms they had formerly occupied were at present vacant.

"Not just at present; but the prospects are that they may be in the course of a month or so."

"Could you tell me exactly when?"

"I could not."

"They are now occupied?"

"They are."

Miss Ruggles grew quite red in the face; whimsically conscious of her own curtness, she was yet unable to subdue it. Glancing uneasily at Ellen who was, with shaded eyes, look-

thoughtfully into the fire, seemingly unaware of anything uliar in her companion's manner, the uncomfortable vestal k heart of grace, and began knitting rapidly.

'I am glad your rooms are to be vacated," said Ellen ıingly, and without looking up. "I wish I was back re; the stillness seems so grateful after the noise of a rge boarding-house. No; I have never been so happy sewhere."

Miss Ruggles' icy manner thawed considerably. She was ot ungratified at this spontaneous approval of her own ıuiet domicile; and, as her guest sat, with bowed head, ıatching the fantastic shapes put on by the glowing coals in the open fire-place, the owner thereof related, unquestioned, the fact that the kitchen and former work-room of Mr. Leroy had been rented by an artist, who had had a sky-light put in the latter room, which he used as a studio.

"But the front chambers," interposed Ellen, "are they all let?"

Miss Ruggles, to borrow a nautical phrase, was so taken aback by this unexpected interruption that it was several minutes before she spoke again.

Ellen wisely refrained from noticing her confusion, and, after succeeding in laying hold of the broken thread of her ideas, she thus resumed:

"I will tell you about that, Miss, when I get to it. I used to hear the poor painter coughing ever so much, but I always supposed it was the paints he used that affected his throat, till one day that he didn't come out of his room from morning till night, and then I was afraid he was sick. I meant to have gone up to his chamber to inquire after him, but I couldn't quite make up my mind to start, for I can't bear strangers—that is—I didn't mean—" and Miss Ruggles, with a look of distress, came to a full pause, staring helplessly in the face of her visitor, as though half inclined to remedy this unfortunate turn her remarks had incontinently

taken, by rushing from the room and leaving Ellen to her own meditations.

The truth was, this forlorn, elderly maiden not only had all a shy person's dread of being laughed at, but would gladly have treated every one who approached her, not only with civility but true cordiality, if she had only known how. It was a keen sense of her own short-comings, in this respect, that made her shrink with such morbid shyness from the formation of new acquaintances, which was the more unfortunate, as of old ones she had none.

Not a chance visitor left her room, but she sensitively recalled every word and tone of her own that might have annoyed or wounded her guest, thus making herself so wretchedly uncomfortable, that, sooner than endure such self-accusations and self-condemnations, she would willingly have exchanged all human companionship for that of her cat and dog, to whom she had no fears of giving offence. Growing old, ever shy and alone! what wonder that the forlorn spinster grows, week by week, more morbid in her isolation?—and wastes hours in self-reproaches for the pain unintentionally given to the few persons with whom chance brings her in contact, while they, in turn, scarce give the "queer little old maid" a second thought, when once out of her presence?

After dropping half the stitches on her needle, Miss Ruggles was once more reassured by observing that Ellen's unmoved serenity of look and attitude gave no indication of her having made a personal application of the unfortunate allusion to "strangers;" and, in a fluttered, nervous way she resumed:

"Next day I *did* go up, and high time it was that somebody looked after the poor man; for he was so weak he couldn't get out of bed. He cried like a child, when I asked what I could do for him; and wrote a line with a pencil to send to Mr. Walgreen, at the Tremont House. I carried it there myself, though I would rather have taken a whipping

.n have done it. Presently two gentlemen came to the ıse: one was the doctor. He said Mr. Henslie was morly sick, and couldn't last many weeks. I saw the other ntleman crying, as he came down stairs with the doctor; d heard him say, 'If he had only sent for me sooner!' e was a properly handsome man, this Mr. Walgreen, but one blind. He paid the family occupying the front rooms give them up to him: hired the whole floor, and furnished elegantly with rich furniture and pictures; for he's as parcular as though he could see. Before doing that, though, e had a couple of doors cut through, from your old sittingoom to the two front chambers—that will make it all the ıore convenient for Mr. Leroy; you belong to his family, if remember rightly."

"It was not for them, but for myself alone, that I wished to ngage a single room," said Ellen, blushing, she scarcely knew hy.

"Then we need say no more about it, for I haven't any single rooms to let," said Miss Ruggles, rising with an air of relief, that now she might terminate the interview; and, a moment later, showing evident signs of distress at having unwittingly intimated to her guest that her presence was no longer acceptable.

Ellen preceded her embarrassed companion into the hall, but when, at the outer door, she turned round to bid her "Good morning," Miss Ruggles was nowhere to be seen.

Ellen was considerably disappointed at the failure of her application for a room at Miss Ruggles': like most things in this life, it seemed doubly desirable when found to be impossible of attainment. Her pace slackened; she was growing weary, and began to feel that mental disquietude which springs from physical exhaustion.

Little time as she had to spare, she could not pass Mr. More's shop without stepping in to inquire for the health of the family.

She found Mr. More, as usual, astride a stool behind the counter, munching crackers and cheese. His short, thick hands were unmistakably dirty, and his broad, full-moon face only possibly clean.

He asked after Elvira with an appearance of strong interes but when it came to answering inquiries in regard to the heal of his younger daughter, he really didn't know much about Jan It was of very little use trying to do anything for that girl; s was always out of sorts, no matter what was done for her; a little enough comfort to anybody. The last time he saw he she was as cross as two sticks; that was two days ago; and I made up his mind then to keep out of her way till she got so s could speak to him without looking as though she wanted t bite his head off. He believed she staid up stairs because s had a cold, wasn't certain; wouldn't Ellen walk in and see f herself?

Thus invited, she could hardly refuse; and made her way once to the kitchen, where she found Margery, a freshly instal domestic, stamping about the room in stout hob-nailed sho striving, with a haste which defeated itself, to reduce to order t chaos of confusion into which every dish, plate and stew-pan the house seemed to have resolved themselves. Chairs, tab and mantel, were alike cumbered with cooking utensils.

Margery's round, shining face lit up with smiles, as, on lea ing who Ellen was, she wiped her hands on her apron, and, moving a flat-iron, some cold potatoes and very dirty dish-tow from a chair, she presented the same to Ellen, saying, "Su an its the swatest face I've seen in Ameriky, ye have; an deloighted the young misthress 'll be to say ye, an throth."

Away went the hob-nailed shoes and the round, jolly fac and soon Ellen was shown into a chamber that wore anythi but an inviting air. In the rusty grate smouldered a fire Lehigh coal, which, having been newly replenished, was se ing forth volumes of greenish gas; the small portion that caped into the room proving the unpleasantness of its od The dingy carpet not only exhibited traces of both coal-hod ash-pan, but fitted so ill as to lay in folds against every he article of furniture in the room.

Jane herself, in a soiled and faded wrapper, too tight in neck and too short in the waist, for it had once belonged Elvira, was lying on an old-fashioned lounge, whose tatt

›vering, of red bombazette, afforded a less brilliant contrast ıan it had once done to the rows of brass-headed nails tacking ; to the frame.

"It doesn't look much like Elvira's gew-gawed sitting-room, I now," said Jane, with a harsh laugh, as she noticed the involntary glance Ellen cast about her on entering the room. "I suppose there is no use in asking you to sit down in such a poor place as this."

Ellen drew a chair up to the lounge, and sat down with a forced smile, but with a look of kindness that was genuine.

"It is a long time since you have been to see us, Jane."

"I should hope so! I had such a delightful call the last time I went, that it is strange I could content myself away so long, isn't it? Hustled into a little, stived-up bedroom, when Elvira's fashionable callers came in, and kept there, sweltering and starving, most the whole afternoon—a great inducement to call again, I must say—that is, if I'd received an invitation, which I didn't."

Ellen felt that the *plaintiff* had just cause of offence, and hastened to escape from the unfortunate topic, by saying, "Your father said something about your having a bad cold: I hope it is better."

"No; worse. I wish I was dead."

Ellen recoiled, as she had often done before, at the outbursts of this fierce, rebellious spirit.

"You shock and pain me, Jane," she said reprovingly. "How dare you speak in that way, lest even the blessings you have should be taken away, in punishment of your ingratitude?"

"Blessings! *blessings*, did you say? Ah! yes! I had nearly forgotten how many I have to lose—beauty, fortune, troops of friends! It would be really dreadful to have all these taken away from me; I couldn't survive it."

She laughed, but it was not a sound of mirth, and there was a sort of sullen triumph in her look, as of one who has the best of an argument.

"There have been those who have wanted for bread; then, think of *your health, that*, surely is a boon to be thankful for."

said Ellen, in a tone of deep feeling, for she was thinking of Mrs. Ames and her suffering little ones.

"My health! I tell you I am sick abed," was the impatient rejoinder.

Ellen laid her hand on the burning brow of the speaker, and started to find with what feverous heat it was throbbing.

"If you are no better to-morrow, Jane, would you not like to have me come and read aloud to you, or do whatever I can to make you comfortable?"

"I don't like to have anybody watch me when I'm in pain; I'd rather be by myself," was the discourteous reply; but, even as she spoke, the hard lines about her mouth relaxed, and tears gathered under her eyelids—tears dashed hastily, almost scornfully, aside.

A growing sense of weariness admonished Ellen to shorten her call; even to talk was becoming an effort; and she was glad once more to turn her steps homeward—if a boarding-house can ever be called *home*.

Up the long staircase at Laramont's she wearily dragged herself, and her heart sank in her bosom, like the quicksilver in Fahrenheit at a passing chill, as, on opening the parlor door she saw Miss Bennett in close converse with Elvira.

"It is long past your dinner-hour; what in the world has detained you?" cried the latter. Then, without waiting for a reply, she added, "Laurence waited half an hour for you, to enquire after a Mrs. Ames, I believe the woman's name is, because Mr. Trueburn has taken a sudden curiosity to find out if she is in need of anything more at present."

It instantly flashed across Ellen's mind that Mr. Trueburn was the widow's unknown benefactor; and he instantly rose to a high place in her esteem, from the delicate and unobtrusive manner in which he had ministered to the necessities of the unfortunate.

"Who is Mrs. Ames, pray? A person one would wish to know?" carelessly asked Miss Bennett.

"O gracious, no indeed," replied the complacent Elvira; "she's only a poor miserable beggar woman, who don't seem capable of earning the salt of her broth—not one of our sort at all. Her

band drinked himself to death, I believe. The city ought to k after its paupers, I'm sure; for private families have enough do to look out for themselves. Here's Ellen, though, always ady to seek out that low sort of company. I wish you could st see her especial favorite—an old washerwoman, and the very lthiest old slattern you ever laid eyes on. But you haven't told s yet, Ellen, what kept you so long away."

"I went for a doctor for poor Mrs. Ames and her children, who were both ill," Ellen replied in a voice of cold restraint. 'Then I stayed awhile to make them all as comfortable as I could, before coming away."

As her application at Miss Ruggles had proved unsuccessful, she avoided provoking unwelcome comment by passing it by without mention, and proceeded at once to give an account of her call at Mr. More's, and of Jane's indisposition.

"A sister! I was not aware you had any relatives in the city, Mrs. Leroy," said Miss Bennett, in evident surprise.

"Ah!" said Elvira, with a covert but resentful glance at Ellen, "I did not think the subject would interest you, or I should have spoken of it before; poor Jane met with a distressing accident, when quite a child, which confines her most of the time to the house, and prevents my seeing her as frequently as I could wish." And the sympathetic sister cast down her eyes to hide the grief they expressed—not.

"Very sad," said Miss Bennett, quite satisfied that the subject should drop.

Turning to Ellen, she asked, with startling abruptness, "What should you think, Miss Verne, of a young lady who made herself the talk of chambermaids and servants generally, by receiving money from gentlemen in corridors? Rather mysterious, isn't it?"

Ellen winced unconsciously, and gnawed her nether lip without being aware of it, her face burning with painful blushes, and her whole manner giving evidence of the extreme agitation under which she was laboring. This was just the course of action best calculated to pique Miss Adelphine's curiosity, and she exchanged a *significant* glance with Elvira.

"It was not Laurence who gave you the money, at all events, for he told me so," cried his amiable spouse.

"Perhaps all Miss Verne's friends are not married men, subject to cross-questionings from watchful wives," suggested Miss Bennett, maliciously.

Ellen groaned in spirit; but put a strong restraint upon herself; and, but for the quivering of her lips, was seemingly calm. It took her but a very few moments to decide how to act. Sensitively and shrinkingly averse to the faintest shade of publicity, she had simply signed the initials of her name to her first newspaper article, without the remotest intention of revealing the secret of her contributions to the columns of the "Cauterizer." But better this, by far, than suspicions of she knew not what duplicity, with which she intuitively felt they were wronging her.

"I wrote an article for next week's "Cauterizer," she said, avoiding the pitiless gaze of her listeners; "and the money I received from Mr. Trueburn was in payment for the same."

To have seen Ellen's shrinking attitude and almost frightened look, one would have thought it had been a capital offence, or at least some grave breach of decorum, she had been called upon to confess.

Miss Bennett's look of surprise had in it something of disappointment, and mortification even.

"So ho! we're a bit of a blue-stocking, are we?" she cried, with affected gaiety.

Now this term "blue-stocking" could have had no reference to Ellen's hose, which were invariably of the whitest. Much greater regard had she to the neatness and taste of her dress than to the quality and richness of its material.

"I suppose we must all mind our p's and q's now, if we don't want to be stuck on a pen-point, and held up as a warning to evil-doers. Now that I know my danger, I for one shall beat a hasty retreat." And without ceremony, Miss Bennett took leave.

Very different was the effect produced upon Elvira by Ellen's unexpected disclosure. Here was a way in which her time and

alents could be made more profitable to herself than they had ever been hitherto. Of course, thought this notable schemer for self, Ellen, dependent as she always has been on us for support, will never dream of having any interests separate from ours. Highly convenient, as she conceived, would it be for her to be able to procure a little spending-money, now and then, without being forced to apply to her husband for the same. There was a wreath of red rose-buds at White's which she had set her heart on having, it would make her bonnet look *so* fresh and becoming.

Under the influence of this genial imagining, her manner insensibly softened toward Ellen, and she even went the length of ordering a lunch for her. Notwithstanding the sour looks of the servants at the unseasonableness of the hour for any such repast, sandwiches and a bit of cold chicken were finally placed before the half-fainting Ellen. Longer might she have waited, but for the potency of a bright red neck-ribbon which Elvira had bethought her to bestow on a grumbling house-maid.

Going out for a walk herself, Elvira left Ellen for, firstly, a half-hour's rest on the lounge, and, after that, diligent employ on the ball-fringe for the opera-hood needed next evening.

Ellen dreaded meeting Mr. Leroy at tea-time; she might have spared herself the trouble, as he scarcely looked at her, or seemed, for more than an instant at a time, to be aware of her presence at the table.

Remarking his abstracted manner, and the cloud of care on his brow, Ellen, true to the instinct of a generous nature, straightway forgot her own perplexities in overpowering anxiety for his, whatever they might be. After tea, he left the house directly, and she did not see him again for the night.

In the course of the evening, a servant handed her a scrap of paper, saying she had been requested by a gentleman to give it to Miss Verne. On it, was written with pencil:

"Willie is worse; come to me to-morrow morning if possible.

ELIZABETH AMES."

Ellen sat up late to finish the fringe, not knowing what mi occur, next day, to prevent its completion, thus depriving h self, for the time, of the coveted privilege of confiding l thoughts to paper.

Next morning, early, she reached Mrs. Ames's; but, early she was, there was one still earlier in arriving.

CHAPTER XX.

ENTERING THE DARK VALLEY—SICK BODY, SICK MIND.

It was Mr. Trueburn who gravely inclined his head to El as she entered the widow's apartment.

"I hoped it was the doctor, when you opened the door, M Verne; I left a message on his slate, an hour ago."

The speaker was standing beside Mrs. Ames, who, wit heart-stricken expression of countenance, supported Wil head on her arm. His face was already darkening beneath impression of that livid seal whose stamp each living face n one day bear. His eyes were closed, and he breathed loudly hoarsely, with occasional convulsive writhings, as if to es from the dread Presence in whose grasp he feebly strug At each recurrence of these spasms the mother groaned al as if herself enduring their agony.

Dr. Johnde hastily entered the room soon after Ellen's rival.

"Oh! doctor, can nothing be done to relieve him?" Ames asked with difficulty, for her lips were parched, swo stiff, with the heart's fever of maternal anguish.

Dr. Johnde beckoned Ellen round to the side of the bed w the sufferer lay.

"Here, Miss Verne, your fingers are small; just insert and draw the phlegm from his throat, while I press down lower jaw."

She obeyed, with a strange chill creeping over her frame. For awhile he breathed easier, then commenced that rattling, gurgling sound in the throat, which those who have once heard comprehend too readily—ah, too readily! on hearing again. The widow slid from her chair to her knees, with a wild cry for mercy. Dr. Johnde assisted her to rise, for she seemed to have lost all control of her muscles, and re-seated her in her chair.

"Do not distress yourself unnecessarily, madam," he said, in that calm tone which is so impressive in the hour of trial. "This is much more painful for us than for him to bear. His brain is already paralyzed; and I assure you that, according to my firm belief, he has no consciousness of suffering. These last, lingering throes are mechanical—purely mechanical—showing the tenacious hold of youth upon life."

She gave him a look which said, "O! if I could but believe you."

"Willie, my darling," she murmured, bending over her boy, "if you know mamma, give her some sign: only move a finger, if you can hear mamma speaking to her dear dying boy."

The shrivelled hands were already stiff in death; but the glazing eyes partially unclosed, as if in answer to the mother's appeal, and, with a look half of vacancy, half of loving recognition, fixed on her face, while a gush of tears flowed over his own.

Even Dr. Johnde was startled by an occurrence so unusual.

The widow's face was almost stony in its rigidity as she said, "But for strong drink, my youngest-born might still be spared to me. O my son! would I could die for thee."

The eyes of the dying boy opened wide, and, after rolling a moment beneath the upper lids, became fixed and staring. Dr. Johnde bent forward and gently closed them, saying,

"He has gone the path we all must travel."

There was an instant's hush in the room, broken by a shriek, loud, piercing, distinct, from what they were sadly regarding as a corpse.

The mother tremblingly replaced the arm she had but just withdrawn from beneath the head of what was still her child.

A strange feeling of awe thrilled through Ellen's frame, and, by some electric chain of association, her mind was carried back to those days of dread on the wide, wide sea, when death had seemed very near. With the unreasoning terror of a frighted child, Bessie clung about her neck. This was the first death the poor girl had ever witnessed, as her miserable father had been killed in a drunken street-brawl; and it must be confessed, the "fell destroyer" now presented himself in no gentle guise.

Again and again that thrilling cry of expiring nature rose on the stillness of the room, growing fainter and more faint with each repetition, until it entirely ceased. A slight quivering about the muscles of the mouth, and all that remained to them of Willie was but dust.

Mrs. Ames rose rigidly upright, threw up her arms with a long-drawn, shivering sigh, and fell prone upon the bed, across the body of her dead child.

"She has fainted, poor thing! I wish she could be gotten out of the room before she revives," said Dr. Johnde.

"It shall be done," returned Mr. Trueburn, hastening out of the room to request the use of the apartment opposite, for a little while. Miss Gurdy was playing a quick-step to the time of a dead march, and thankfully vacated the room at Mr. Trueburn's request. Any event that procured her a recess in her dire attempts at musical execution—assassination would perhaps be the better word—was hailed by her as a God-send.

Raising the prostrate form of the unconscious widow in his powerful arms, Mr. Trueburn bore her into the parlor of Mrs. Gurdy. Ellen followed with Bessie closely wrapped in a shawl, and sat down with the child in her arms.

Although Mrs. Ames lay quite still, Ellen soon became aware from the deep, shivering sobs bursting from her white lips, that she had awakened to a bitter sense of bereavement. Ellen had whispered words of consolation to Bessie, until her first violent outburst of childish grief had subsided into a milder flow of tears; but the mother's sorrow she felt she could scarcely comprehend, much less solace.

A considerable time elapsed before Dr. Johnde made his ap-

pearance, and, assisting the widow to rise from the sofa she had not attempted to leave, gave her his arm, with an air of respectful sympathy, and conducted her back to the room where lay all that was mortal of *poor* Willie, (who shall say how *rich* in the "better land ?") Passively she allowed herself to be seated beside the table whereon he had been laid ; for, surely, she may yield to the weakness and weariness which almost incapacitate her from thinking, even now, that her dead darling will have need of a mother's tender, loving care nevermore. There he lay before her, his limbs smoothed, and robed in a long flowing garment of white, his face covered with a snowy handkerchief.

"This is a grief in which the stranger intermeddleth not," said Dr. Johnde to Ellen, as he quietly left the room with Mr. Trueburn.

Ellen felt the force of the remark, and, without disturbing the widow from the waking trance into which she had fallen, stole softly forth, leaving the living alone with their dead.

Strange, very strange, after that darkened room, that veiled face, seemed the pleasant sunshine which nestled to earth as tenderly, as cheerily, as though in all the wide world was neither suffering, bereavement, nor death. Jarred harshly on her saddened ear the jocund laugh of loud-voiced wagoner, the rude jokes of burly truckmen, and the playful shouts of robust errand-boys.

A group of merry, laughing infant school-children passed her by; and their gleeful voices and handsome attire told of homes where want was a stranger, and grim hunger never came—a self-invited guest. Laugh on, little ones, be joyous while you may; for sorrow full soon will find you out ; none so lofty, and none so lowly, as to escape her all-pervading vision—a pertinacious, intrusive guest, in sooth, and not to be deterred by the most peremptory "Not at home," being no respecter of times and seasons. For each and every one of you, a full measure of trouble is meted out, and—thank Heaven for *this !*—for each and every one, his due meed of consolation.

Ellen found Jane More in bed, and seemingly much worse than *on the previous day.* The room, too, had, if possible, a more

comfortless air of neglect. A bowl of sour gruel stood on chair beside the bed: the fire had gone out, and Jane wa shaking with fever chills. She did not even open her eyes Ellen approached the bedside. The latter was terrified at th hoarse and labored breathing, so like that of the child who ha seen that morning's sunrise, but now slept the long sleep tha knoweth no earthly awakening.

When we see one of our fellow-voyagers sink, before our ver eyes, amongst the dread quicksands, lying so treacherously i wait for every bark freighted with human life, a strong feeling insecurity (oftener for others than ourselves) springs up within u It was this feeling that gave wings to Ellen's feet, as she fle down stairs and begged Mr. More to send immediately for D Johnde. A man of highly phlegmatic temperament was M More, who always took things easily, or rather permitted the to take themselves along, as chance or Providence directed. Through the influence of Ellen's earnest persuasions, the desir message was speedily despatched.

Dr. Johnde promptly obeyed the summons; and, after a hal nod to Ellen, proceeded, with true professional instinct, to bedside of his new patient. He held the unresisting wrist fo minute under his thumb, took a keen look at the flushed fa murmuring, as if to himself,

"One hundred and forty! Life would soon burn itself at that rate of combustion."

Turning to Ellen, he said in a rapid whisper, "It was your messenger met me on the steps, as I was going out, this is a case that admits of no delay—a complicated diseas the lungs; acute inflammation accompanied by violent feve Have you any one here who can run out to the apotheca Brown's, this instant?"

"I can go sooner than the errand-boy," replied Ellen, bu ing on her bonnet and shawl while the doctor was busy with prescription. She took the scrap of paper he handed her, the house with rapid steps, and as rapidly returned with ev thing he desired. A large and powerful blister was applied the chest, and a second across the back, from shoulder to sh

ler. A potion for allaying fever, was next administered; an opiate left for the night; and the doctor left, promising to call next morning if not sent for before.

"Stop a moment, my good girl," he cried out to Margery, who happened to be descending the stairs before him; "we want to keep the house very still, you see—the less noise the better for the poor sick woman we are trying to get well, as fast as we can; and, don't you see? if you were only a little lighter shod, there wouldn't be such a clattering up and down stairs as I heard a minute ago."

"Bless yer honor, an' is it the like o' Margery O'Dondigel would be afther hurting the young misthress? lit alone being of any sarvice to her." And, without more ado, she sat down on the lower stair, drew off first one and then the other shoe, and pattered away over the freezing oil-cloth in her bare feet.

"A diamond in the rough," muttered the doctor to himself; "but none the less a diamond for a' that."

After sending word to Elvira that her sister was too ill to be left alone, and that she should remain with her until she was otherwise provided for, Ellen busied herself in doing what she could for the comfort of the household in general.

In the evening, Elvira, looking very gay in a white cashmere polka dotted with red, called, on her way to the concert, to enquire after her suffering sister. The carriage, with Mr. and Miss Bennett, was waiting for her at the door, so she could stop but a moment, Elvira cried out in a little flutter of pleasurable excitement as she entered the room. That voice, pitched on that jubilant key, seemed to awaken all the slumbering bitterness of the sick girl's soul. By a violent exercise of will, she shook off the lethargy, which sought to hold her in thrall, sufficiently to receive this gaily dressed sister who came to her with bracelets on her arms and flowers in her hair, with studied ungraciousness.

"You needn't have tricked yourself out in all this finery, Elvira, to have come to such a poor place as this; you will find no admirers here."

"I am going to a concert, and thought I would stop and see how *you was, on the way*; small thanks I get for coming, though.

If you aren't well, it's no reason you should be cross to me-am not to blame for your suffering."

"I can't be entertaining when I'm in misery, and, what more, I sha'n't try; but I don't hope or expect either sist kindness or consideration from you; I gave up all such thoug long ago, and it's well that I did. I had no idea of your tak the trouble to call and see me; you have more than satisfied expectations, so now go away. Who would take us for sist You beautiful—I hideous! You going to enjoy yourself liste to music and song, while I hear only my own miserable groan

"Don't, Jane," said Elvira, looking really distressed; " do you wish to spoil my happiness for the evening?"

"*Your* happiness! yes, it is only of self that you think; I pose if my death should interrupt your pleasures, for a seas should be regretted on that account, if no other. I can't any longer; I'm almost dying with pain, do go."

Thus, mutually resentful, did these two sisters part nev meet again in this life.

The next morning Jane was so much better as to be ab declare herself much worse, and to make herself generally greeable. She called for gruel, and when it almost strangle to swallow it, on account of the inflamed state of her throa called it vile stuff, not half as well made as that Margery prepared for her the previous day.

"I shall do just what I've a mind to, in my own room, f anybody," she asserted with a defiant look at Ellen. "I groan as often, and as loud, as I please; and if anybody wish to hear me, why, they can just keep out of the way; get along by myself. Of course, anybody who has been us rich carpets, and satin and velvet furniture, can't be expect be contented here; luckily they aren't obliged to stay; I sho think of asking them to do such a thing."

Knowing herself to be needed, Ellen wisely shut her against all hints of this nature, determined to remain at her as Elvira had advised, until the arrival of a certain Aunt Hu a half sister of Mr. More's, who had been summoned fron *country.*

Dr. Johnde early made his appearance.

"I am glad to find you so comfortable, this morning," he said, stepping briskly up to the bedside.

Jane set *her* face, like a flint, against the influence of any geniality *his* might express.

"Comfortable!" she cried, "when every breath I draw is like a flame of fire. What makes you think I am better than I was yesterday?"

"I did not say you were better, but only more comfortable; of course we know you must be worse before you are better; the fever must have its run."

"It must? then if your medicine is not going to do anything towards stopping the fever, or making me better, where is the good of my taking the vile stuff? or of your coming at all, as for that matter?"

"Perhaps I may succeed in making it run a little smoother—a little faster, possibly."

"Faster! oh my goodness, doctor! would you have it run me into my grave? I can't endure anything much worse than this. This scarf of fire you've drawn about my shoulders prevents my lying in any sort of a comfortable posture—horrid blisters! I can't move so much as a finger without tearing them, and making them prickle like so many needle-points."

"I hope you may not need their application again," said the doctor, with commendable mildness; for he was too wise a physician to take umbrage at any manifestation of that extreme mental irritability which is so often the precursor of the more deadly forms of disease. "Did you rest well last night, under the influence of the opiate I left for you?"

"I didn't rest at all, and as for opium, I hate it. It lifts you up in spirit, for a little while, and then drops you down into the very depths of despair—*there* is where I've been, all the latter part of the night. Oh dear! if you've got any medicine that is worth a straw, do, for pity's sake give me something to relieve this abominable pain."

Dr. *Johnde seated* himself beside the unreasonable speaker,

laying his hand on her burning forehead, as he said in a calm, grave tone, looking kindly but steadily in her face:

"Miss More, you must not resent my giving you a word of advice: you have a long and severe siege before you; try to meet it with all the fortitude you can summon to your aid, and to possess your soul in patience—herein lies your only safety. So, do not waste your energies in struggling against what is inevitable. The battle now raging between your own vital energies and the powers of disease, is not yet nearly at its height; so, husband well your resources, that, when the crisis arrives, you may have the better chance of coming off victorious."

Jane raised her eyes to his face with a frightened glance.

"It is so hard to bear pain," she said in a more subdued tone than she had yet used, "when one can eat nothing to keep up one's strength; and it is doubtless much easier to apply blisters to others, than to wear them one's self."

"I am quite aware of that, my dear young lady," he replied with a quiet smile, "as I am frequently in the way of trying either experiment. A little plaster of cantharides is no such very bad thing, if one has only time to attend to it; but this is more than my patients will allow me. I was obliged to button my coat over a half-drawn blister, last night, and drive out to Roxbury to see a dying man at nearly midnight, and I have not yet found time to dress the same."

Jane looked at him with an air of thoughtful curiosity. Deep feelings were at work within her; she began to discover that there was such a thing as silent, uncomplaining endurance; and that, carried into practice, was both braver and nobler than her ceaseless repinings, her querulous discontent.

The doctor rose to go; his words had been medicine to her spirit. In her present frame of mind, the gentlest rebuke would have been received with burning resentment, and lessons of fortitude have been inculcated in vain, by one who had never himself needed to practice what he taught.

"If the opiates affect you disagreeably," he said, "we must try something else; perhaps hemlock, valerian, or ether, would suit you better."

"Whatever you think best to prescribe, doctor," his patient replied with unwonted submissiveness.

As the sagacious physician had predicted, Jane grew worse, day by day. Tears often stood on her poor scarred face, but she no longer uttered either groans or complaints. It is the earlier and lighter stages of disease that irritate us almost beyond the power of self-control; under its heavier and sterner pressure, we are subdued, body and soul, to a state of unresisting quiescence—mortal agony is generally endured in silence.

CHAPTER XXI.

AUNT HULDAH, A WOMAN OF PRINCIPLE.

I MENTIONED that Ellen only purposed remaining with Jane until her aunt had time to answer, in person, the summons which had been despatched for her to the country. That summons had been received by its object; and not "loud but deep" was the rejoicing amongst the juvenile portion of the family, in which, for the last year, Aunt Huldah had been domesticated, at prospect of her speedy departure.

The maternal relative of these luckless juveniles was always "sort o' poorly," as aunt Huldah phrased it, and so, the frigid spinster kept rigorous watch and ward over the infantile corps under her drill. On Sunday, more especially, did this amiable vestal, clothed in superior sanctity, set herself up, in awful state, as a terror and a reproach to all evil-doers. At earliest day-break, she donned a snowy lawn cap, with a most impracticable border, seeming to say, "Trifle with me at *your peril*;" assuming, at the same time, a coun-

tenance of such gloomy austerity as she deemed fitting the sacredness of the day.

Woe to the unfortunate youngling who was betrayed into indulgence of a prohibited smile! a single glance from A Huldah's cold grey eyes suggested a vision of cuffed ears hearty shakings to his affrighted imagination, quite sufficient draw down the boyish face to the prescribed length.

After breakfast, the childish group was huddled together the coldest corner of the room, and Sabbath-school lessons hearsed for the last time. Then came the ablutions, preparat to getting ready for church. How Aunt Huldah's large, b hand scrubbed the little tender faces, knocking hard against noses; and eyes, ears and mouth, if incontinently opened, filled with villainous soap-suds. Then, there are the cold g meeting clothes to be scrambled into, and away they g church—the four boys, marshaled by Aunt Huldah.

Upon the high pew-seats, these young sprigs of humanity murely perch themselves, their unsupported feet dangling in air, for, of course, no one has a footstool but Aunt Hul Very erect, in listening attitude, sit the juvenile quart through the delivery of a tough doctrinal discourse, giving s token certainly of being mingled with that spiritual alir known as "milk for babes." Is it Aunt Huldah's untiring veillance that keeps the little faces so steadily turned toward desk of the preacher, and the young eyes from a moment's dering? or have they really some faint perception of the m ing of this abstruse theological disquisition? and, if so, wh to save them from a virulent attack of spiritual indigestion?

Tears are running down the face of little "Sammyvil-" tears of contrition, but natural drops wrung forth by the ness of his poor numbed feet. The single stove in the b aisle imparts but a faint degree of warmth to this large chu of barn-like proportions.

"Wipe up," says Aunt Huldah, sternly; "wiggle your round inside your boots, for a minute or two, and then atten the preaching and not think of such things as feet again in mon-time."

At noon, they partake of a frugal lunch of bread, cheese and apple-sauce, then back again, in single file, they parade, first to Sunday-school, and then to church. What a horribly long sermon it is, to be sure, with its firstly, secondly, thirdly, up to twelvthly and lastly. During its continuance, Eben is awakened out of a sly little nap, in which he is striving to indulge, sitting bolt upright, by a grip of Aunt Huldah's bony fingers, which leave their mark on his shoulder for many a day thereafter; and Sammyvil, for pulling off his boots and holding a foot in either hand to keep it warm, is whisked off the seat and pounced down upon Aunt Huldah's cricket, where he keeps up a subdued snivelling during the remainder of the services.

What a brightening up is there of dimmed and tear-stained eyes as the benediction is finally pronounced! and these younglings of the flock are permitted to march home, headed by that veteran dragoon, Aunt Huldah.

At four o'clock comes *the* meal of the day, consisting of baked beans and Indian pudding. After this, the boys are gathered in a semi-circle about Aunt Huldah's chair, while she reads aloud to them the knottiest portions of the Old-Testament dispensation, stopping, now and then, to reprimand her hearers sharply, over the covers of that blest volume which teaches us to be meek and long suffering, slow to wrath, full of all tender mercies and loving charities.

In the course of the reading, Sammyvil receives a smart rap over the head, for playing with the Maltese kitty instead of listening to what he cannot understand—a description of the typical ceremonies connected with the burnt-offerings of the ancient Israelites.

Eben is shut up in a dark closet, for whispering to Jonas that a crow has lit on a tree outside the window; and Rufus is sent to bed before dark, for having taken the opportunity, while Aunt Huldah's back was turned, of stealing out to the hen-house and feeding the bantams with corn, which they pecked from his hand; and for afterwards having made his way to the barn for a friendly call on the brindled calf. Thus ends this sacred day, which, to the *younger* members of the family is the dreariest of

all the seven. Is it to be wondered at, that they rejoice exceedingly at the departure of one who has ruled them with a rod of iron?

But to return to Ellen: she was not destined to resign her self-imposed office of nurse so soon as she had anticipated. This office, thus far, had proved anything but a sinecure: Jane required unwearying attention; and, below stairs, devolved upon her the delicate task of teaching Margery the golden mean between a raw beef-steak and the same article done to a cinder; also of insinuating that, in this land of plenty, there was no necessity for using the same dish-cloth, indiscriminately, in cleansing stove-hearth, goblet and gridiron. I say "insinuating," for good-natured as was Margery, the pride of all the O'Dondigels swelled in her breast, at thought of being supposed ignorant of the most approved methods of housekeeping.

Greatly to her own indignation and disgust, had Margery repeatedly been warned by Mr. More to be careful of the camphene can, and never allow a particle of flame to approach its contents; but, notwithstanding these warnings, when the barrel of shavings was one morning found empty, in her haste to light the fire, she saturated a handful of rags with the combustible fluid, and, throwing them into the stove, applied a lighted match thereto. On the instant, she was nearly stunned by a loud explosion; pots and kettles were thrown about the room; and she was knocked down by a flying stove-cover, after having had her eye-brows and front hair thoroughly singed from her forehead. Much less easily would she have escaped had her cotton dress taken fire.

But to return to the cause of Ellen's protracted stay at Mr. More's: He was stricken down with paralysis, on the very day of Aunt Huldah's arrival, thus leaving Ellen to close attendance on her charge. The new comer, being obliged to bestow her undivided attention upon her helpless brother, though improving every opportunity she found of leaving his bedside, to rush down to the shop, and accuse the indignant store-boy of taking improper liberties with the oranges and pea-nuts, assuring the angrily indignant youth that she kept a sharp lookout for

all his misdoings, and, sooner or later, he'd be sure to get his deserts.

The crisis of Jane's disease had passed, and yet she did not rally: so exhausted was she, by weeks of unabated suffering, that, when disease began to ebb, she was unable to so much as turn her head on her pillow; and it seemed that a breath would have extinguished the quivering flame, so feebly flickering in life's socket.

Beckoning Ellen to her side, one afternoon, after having lain silent for the previous portion of the day, she said, in a labored whisper, "Do you remember my telling you that I had no blessings to lose? O! Ellen, what an ungrateful wretch I was! Freedom from sharp pain, strength, a few hours of untroubled sleep, a breath of the outside air—oh! if these could only be mine once more, how I would improve them!"

She closed her eyes wearily; the exertion of talking brought on faintness.

A few minutes later, Dr. Johnde came in, followed by Aunt Huldah. The former, while speaking to Ellen in a pleasant, cheery vein, was all the while narrowly scrutinizing his patient; not a shade of her countenance, or a change in her attitude, escaped his practiced eye.

"I am going to prescribe a great treat for our invalid here," he said; "a spoonful of brandy and a wine-glass of champagne, given on alternate hours."

"We are all temperance folks here, sir," said Aunt Huldah, grimly.

"I should presume so, Madam," replied the doctor, with a matter-of-course air; "but if a patient of mine needed arsenic, as is sometimes the case, arsenic he should have, if I had to administer it with my own hands."

"But, doctor, I have heard of folks getting their first hankering for strong drink, through its being recommended to them by their physicians."

"Very possibly. Miss Verne, you will please see that my directions are scrupulously followed," said the doctor, with unruffled composure.

Aunt Huldah looked daggers at him, but where was the use, when he *wouldn't* see her?

He left, then came back to the door and beckoned Ellen out upon the landing, to repeat to her his directions, with additional explanations. Aunt Huldah joined them.

"What do you think of Jane?" she asked.

"She seems to be slowly sinking," he replied. "The crisis is past, to be sure, but there is so little vitality left in her system, that her friends must not be too sanguine in their hopes of her recovery: it is always best, in these cases, to be prepared for the worst."

"Have you told her there is little prospect of her getting well?"

"By no means; the shock of such a communication, in her feeble state, would only precipitate the event we dread."

"But I insist on her being told, and that right away," said Aunt Huldah, resolutely. "If her days are numbered, she has little enough time left to repent of the evil of her ways; and I shall tell her so."

"If you do, it will be on your own responsibility, and in opposition to my express desire."

Aunt Huldah turned away with an angry flush on her face, entering the chamber while Dr. Johnde was descending the stairs.

Going up to the bedside of her niece, Aunt Huldah laid her hand impressively on the shoulder of the feeble invalid and said, in her coldest and hardest tone, for she was still full of resentment at what she considered the unwarrantable spirit of dictation manifested by Dr. Johnde: "According to what your physician says, Jane, you are sinking fast; and, in all probability, have not many days to live: Do you feel prepared to die? for this is the only thing you ought to concern yourself about, now that your hours are numbered."

Every trace of color faded away from even the lips of the sick girl, and she fainted; Ellen, in the sudden terror of the moment, cried out that she was dead. Aunt Huldah, who had been far from intending to hasten the end of her niece, was really shocked

at the result of her communication; and heaved a sigh of relief when Jane began to exhibit signs of returning consciousness.

When she had fully regained her senses, Aunt Huldah could not resist the temptation of suggesting that, as she had been forced to resign all earthly hopes, it was certainly high time that she set herself diligently to the task of acquiring a heavenly one; and appealed to Jane to say if it was not so.

"I am too weak to talk," feebly articulated the poor invalid.

"That is just what I have always been telling you," said Aunt Huldah, almost triumphant at this opportunity of verifying her own predictions. "That a death-bed is no place for repentance. In all the Scriptures, there is only one instance given of a sinner's being pardoned at the last hour—that of the thief on the cross. O, you poor miserable creature, you should have given heed to my words, in time of health; and then I shouldn't have been compelled by conscience to disturb the last remnant of your days by exhortations to make your peace with an avenging God."

Jane covered her eyes with one hand, and made no attempt at reply.

Having thus faithfully discharged her duty, Aunt Huldah left the room.

Ellen crept round to the foot of the bed, where she remained quite still, until disturbed by the sound of smothered sobs from Jane. In an instant, she was bending over the weeping and exhausted sufferer. Removing the hand she kept pressed over her eyes, Ellen gently wiped the tears therefrom with her own handkerchief, her heart overflowing with a yearning tenderness, such as she had never felt for Jane in her days of health.

"Will any one miss, or mourn for me, when I am gone?" she whispered in a tone of hopeless grief.

Passing her hand caressingly over Jane's beautiful hair, Ellen said encouragingly,

"The doctor has not, by any means, given up hopes of your recovery. He has fears, but did not think best to tell you of them, lest the effect should be injurious; Aunt Huldah did so, on her own responsibility. There, let me slip my arm under your head; it *will make* you lie more easily, poor child. With

the most careful nursing, we will, please Heaven, keep you with us yet"

"Would you really be sorry to part with me?"

"Foolish question! I have so few friends that I could not spare one, without feeling my loss keenly."

"You say '*friend*,' do you mean so?"

"Assuredly, why should you doubt it?"

"Because, even you, good as you are, have felt the effects of my hideous disfigurement; you, too, shrank from me with loathing, like all the rest."

"Not with loathing," said Ellen; "or on account of your disfigurement, by any means, but——" she paused, as if afraid to go on.

"But what?"

"Can you hear the truth?"

"I can't bear anything else."

"Well, then, your manners drove me away from you: I could not love what was morally unlovable. Personal deformity never yet repelled me; and I have never found that others shrank from me on account of my own."

Jane closed her eyes, as if exhausted by the effort of speaking, and hearing; but, after remaining a short time silent, turned her head, as if from a sudden impulse, and kissed the hand which so lately had been caressing her own hair.

Ellen bent her head until it was as nearly as low as that of the sick girl, and prayed, in a whisper, "O Thou, who breakest not the bruised reed, nor quenchest the smoking flax, wilt Thou not bind up this poor bruised spirit, healing it by all holy influences, until it may find rest in the green pastures and by the still waters of thy love."

Jane's lips moved as if repeating the words to herself; then perfect stillness reigned throughout the room. A calm expression of peace, very unusual to it, came over the face of the sick girl. Her breathing, although calm and regular, grew deeper: she was sweetly sleeping. Light were her slumbers, and of short duration, although Ellen scarcely moved so much as a muscle, from the fear of awaking her.

For days, she seemed hovering between life and death. The digestive aparatus had so far lost its tone as to reject, with loathing, the lightest food. Her strength still declined, and she was less than ever able to turn her head on the pillow; Ellen frequently changed its position, greatly to the relief of the sufferer, who thanked her with languid looks of gratitude. The glass of champagne at stated intervals, was the only species of nourishment against which she did not firmly close her lips.

"If it will only buoy up her strength until a reaction takes place in her system, all will be well," said the sagacious physician.

And the reaction came at last, bringing with it fresh pains, and the sharp cravings of hunger, which it was dangerous at once to satisfy. She asked importunately for food, and when it was given her in the smallest quantities, the pain thereby induced was so exquisite, that, for a time, she nearly starved herself, rather than renew the experiment. Her unstrung nerves were transformed into instruments of the keenest torture. Neuralgia wrung tears of anguish from her eyes, and forced groans from her quivering lips. Her mind, of course, sympathized with her body—both were sick nigh unto death.

Shadowy forebodings of evil—of a vague, terrible something, worse than she had yet endured, haunted her waking and sleeping vision, shrouding her spirit in blackest gloom. She was learning, through that hard teacher Experience, her own capacity for suffering; and the lesson thus learnt, however wise in its purpose, and wholesome in its effect, is by no means an inspiriting one.

Ellen's serene cheerfulness acted as a panacea on this sick mind. Although irritable to the last degree, Jane could not be insensible to the soothing influence of her loving tones and gentle ministrations. On the contrary, the very sound of Aunt Huldah's footsteps brought a painful sense of oppression to her niece, who invariably closed her eyes at her aunt's approach, leaving Ellen to answer all enquiries as to her daily progress toward health.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH THE READER IS TAKEN TO A PARTY OF PLEASURE (?)

One evening, Jane had fallen asleep, and Ellen was sitting quite still from fear of disturbing her, when Margery opened the door—not very softly truth forces us to say—and asked if Mr. Leroy could come up.

He had been often, during her illness, to enquire after his sister-in-law; this was the first time he had requested permission to see her. Laying her finger on her lips, to enjoin silence on Margery, whom she left to take her own place in the sick-room, Ellen stole down to the guest, whom she had not seen for several weeks. Each was surprised at the change that this short time had effected in the appearance of the other.

Mr. Leroy's face had grown thin even to haggardness, while the delicate bloom of Ellen's cheek had faded, through the effects of confinement and anxiety.

In Mr. Leroy's manner, also, there was apparent a striking and noteworthy change. He was fitful and abrupt; at times, forgetting himself in the midst of a reply to some question from her, he would abruptly pause, raise his hand to his forehead with a pitiably helpless effort at recalling the subject of conversation, then suddenly lapse into a profound reverie, from which it was difficult to rouse him.

Ellen asked after the health of Elvira. She was well—he believed.

Had he heard from Mrs. Ames? Not lately. Would Ellen like to go and enquire for her? the walk would do her good.

Although reluctant to leave Jane alone with Margery, Ellen suffered her objections on this score to be overruled, and, with Mr. Leroy, sallied forth into the street. As they approached the mansion of the Avondales, which they were to pass on their way, they perceived that the whole house was brilliantly lighted, from attic to basement. Carriage after carriage drove up to the

door, stopped long enough for its inmates to alight, and then moved off to make way for others.

Leaving Ellen and her taciturn companion to their quiet walk, let us ascend the broad stone steps, and, passing through the lofty vestibule,—the hall with its gracefully depending chandelier—a cluster of water-lilies, their petals of crystal, their centres of flame,—follow these richly draped figures up into the ladies' dressing-room. Thence descend we to the drawing-room, where Mr. and Mrs. Avondale stand waiting to receive their friends. Our compliments to the host and hostess once over, we are at liberty to look about us.

The subdued hum of many voices falls not unpleasantly on the ear. Here are many lovely faces, whose natural charms are enhanced and set off by the most tasteful accessories of art. Every brow is cloudless, every face seemingly joyous with anticipations of coming delight. Here, at least, gaiety, mirth, and enjoyment reign supreme. We shall see.

First we recognize our old acquaintance, Mr. Bennett, in one of his most striking attitudes, and best got-up expressions of pathetic resignation. He wears an embroidered satin vest, smells atrociously of musk, and is every way unexceptionable in point of costume. He is of course attended by that most faithful of satellites, Miss Pettigrew, reflecting, as usual, the borrowed light dispensed by her heart's chosen luminary. She is arrayed in virgin white, with a single rose-bud in her hair.

This showy-looking woman, in a dress of pale blue brocade, with a very low corsage and sleeves "*à l'invisible*," is Miss Bennett. Her hair is partly in braids, partly in ringlets—the braids overloaded with pearls, the ringlets with flowers. She is talking, with unwonted vivacity, to a young girl in white muslin and blue ribbons, all sighs and sentimentality, having a vision of weddings and bridal favors in her silly head, as often as she is approached, with commonest courtesy, by an eligible of the opposite sex.

What is there in such an one to inspire all this animation, on the part of Miss Bennett? Plainly, nothing. She is talking *at* a fine looking gentleman standing near; the husband of her friend Emma *Nichols*. Without exactly looking at him, she yet

knows that not a look or tone of her own escapes his scrutin and all her charming vivacity is for him alone.

But here is another prominent figure with which we are m familiar. It is that of a woman, a little past girlhood, of rare brilliant and showy exterior. Strictly speaking, she is styli rather than handsome. In complexion, a dark brunette, th brilliant bloom on her cheeks makes the most delicate roses o Laura Avondale look pale. Miss Villers (the name of our sty ish belle) is robed in crimson velvet, with a bertha of the mo delicate valenciennes. Her fully exposed shoulders are finel formed, and look dazzlingly white as seen in contrast with th heavy black curls which, swept back from her low Grecian fo head, fall in clustering ringlets on her neck.

Her lips are full, with a proud and somewhat downward curv Why should she not indulge in haughty superciliousness? I she not the daughter of a millionaire? Has she not spent tw years in Paris, and a third in making the grand tour of E rope?

To be sure, she has gained no enlarged human sympathi from foreign travel—no refinement or elevation of taste from contemplation of Europe's invaluable treasures of Art; but th she has brought back with her the very latest novelties of fa ion and a sovereign contempt for everything American; even i most flourishing institutions being but the mushroom growth yesterday, and its men of note the merest parvenus, with grandfathers—to speak of. Miss Villers is far from designing include herself in this category, for the portrait of her own gra sire occupies a conspicuous position on the walls of their libra arrayed as he is, in bag-wig and sword, point-lace, ruffles a gold knee-buckles; but, despite this evidence of good desce there are not wanting those who point out the entire lack of semblance between the paternal ancestor and his supposed scendants; maliciously insinuating that the portrait was boug at the auction sale of some decayed English nobleman.

Even the speech of our traveled belle betrayeth the taint a perverted foreign influence, and she graces our homely idio *with a dainty* Parisian accent which suits them as ill as Fren

pperies and frivolities would have done our stern old Puritan ogenitors. She raves of castles, knights, and nobles, recounting, with infinite zest, all the flattering acts of courtesy she received from that most charming of personages, Lady Newpeer, ; her delightful country residence, Moulderwell Abbey.

She goes into raptures, this native of Republican America, at he recollection of an Italian palace—an actual *bona fide* palace f marble, once honored by the presence of a real live emperor—herein she had enjoyed the exalted felicity of half freezing to death, for a whole night, in a musty, fusty old bed of state, with a canopy of tattered tapestry representing the imposing ceremony of the laity kissing Saint Peter's, once heathen Jupiter's great toe; to say nothing of the mischief wrought on her person by those joint occupants of her couch, by Yankee fastidiousness yclept "insects;" and of nearly starving, next day, on a dinner of soup-maigre, followed by four vegetable courses and a dessert of sour oranges. Of these trivial occurrences Miss Villers is strangely oblivious while expatiating to appreciative listeners on the luxuries of foreign travel.

That heavy-looking man with the red nose, calculating grey eyes, and—thanks to the dyer's art—glossy black moustaches, is Miss Viller's papa. He is grimly wondering what earthly pleasure his daughter can find in all this meaningless chatter, which, to him, is so insufferably tedious; and wishes he knew how many weary hours must pass before his carriage will come for him. Decides to turn his back to the assembly and steal a sly peep at his watch. This feat accomplished, he indulges in a yawn so tremendous that his jaw is very nearly dislocated, and he has considerable ado to restore it to its normal condition. Giving a scowl of contempt to one of the muses figuring in an allegorical painting he has all this while been affecting to examine, he once more draws on the company face, expressive of—"What a charming party, delighted to have the honor of attending it," and presents a smiling visage to many another *gay deceiver* fluttering about him.

The fact is, Mr. Villers enjoys nothing so much as a quiet snooze in *his own easy-chair*, unless it be a drowsy chat, all

about stocks and exchange, with his next-door neighbor, Mr. Crabfoot. This gentleman having amassed an ample fortune in Calcutta, now spends his time in alternately *petting* the bulls and bears of the stock-market, and in striving to abate the vagaries of a highly rebellious liver and spleen, which organs obstinately decline the full performance of their appointed functions in the vital economy, actually hanging out the yellow signals of revolt in the very face and eyes of the master, whose faithful vassals they will be never again.

Mr. Crabfoot's highest source of enjoyment, however, is found in repeated alterations of his own "last will and testament," to the exclusion therefrom of this or that luckless relative, who may have been guilty of the black ingratitude of cherishing some opinion not exactly coinciding with that self-opinionated nabob. With the amount thus diverted from his own kith and kin, he purposes endowing some benevolent institution, on condition that said institute assume the name of the donor, in honor of his bequest, as thus: "The Crabfoot Birch and Ferrule Institute," for the reformation of unmanageable boys; a certain amount being bequeathed for the purchase of efficient instruments for the infliction of corporeal punishment, and a certain other sum for the erection of a monument, to be called after the name of the testator, said monument to be kept in constant repair, during their natural lives, by those having received the bounty of the "Birch and Ferrule Institute," in token of gratitude to its illustrious founder.

But come back, my prosy, ill-trained, curry-cob of a Pegasus! Thou art no lady's poetical Andalusian, or steel-spurred, literary veteran's fiery-eyed barb of the desert, that devoureth the earth with his hoofs, and with his nostrils defieth the free winds of heaven, which fail to outstrip him. Beware, then, my half-broken, dull-witted hack, of swerving from the straight, beaten track—of refusing to yield to the curb of thy rider—of imitating the graceful leaps and bold curvetings of thy better practiced and more spirited brethren, *or thou't* surely get a fall, and precipitate thy luckless rider

nongst the Philistines—those argus-eyed "literary detect-
es" who are ever on the alert to march off to the lock-up of
livion, just such unwary stumblers as thou and I, my nag.
turn, then, and, with thine own sober jog-trot, pace, am-
adown the festal scene, whence thou so unceremoniously
ltedst.

A band of music, in another apartment, struck up a lively
hottische, and most of the younger guests repaired to the
ncing hall, above.

As Mr. Bennett was not to be supposed capable of any
ner enjoyment than that derived from exhibiting himself in
most tragic of attitudes, with face deplorably lengthened,
, of course, remained in the drawing-room, although *appa-
ntly* not in the least consoled by the sympathizing glances
his would-be partner in affliction, Miss Pettigrew. What
man being lives there, so cold as to be insensible to the
arms of sympathy? and why should Mr. Bennett forfeit
at of Miss Pettigrew, by ceasing to hug to his heart the
ief that is consuming it—not? Why should he cease to
h, so long as each long-drawn breath is applauded to
echo?

Miss Villers also remained among the dowagers in the
wing-room, although sorely against her will, as we shall
. Soon after her arrival, she had been deeply chagrined
perceiving amongst the guests "a very distant relative,"
s she termed him, of her own. She would have been still
re mortified had she known that it was through his boast-
of a near relationship with herself, that he had obtained
invitation to accompany the friends, with whom he was
ying, to the present company.

To be sure, Miss Villers had been in the yearly habit of spend-
a week or two at the thrifty farm-house of her "distant re-
ions," the Clows; but then, unsophisticated country cousins
so much more prepossessing in their own dairies and hay-
lds, than when surrounded by the artificial glare of city life!
s thought Miss Villers as she stole a furtive glance at Ru-
Clow, in his yellow flowered vest, his ill-fitting slate-colored

kids, and his sleek, soap-locked hair, smelling—faugh!—of a tallow candle; and, in her own mind, decided him to be neither noticable or presentable.

She set her face like a flint against him, turning him the cold shoulder and skilfully retreating from his approach, blind to all the bows and nods with which he strove to attract her notice. When all this manœuvring did not avail in ridding her of her pertinacious pursuer, she stared him full in the face with a look of haughty abstraction, in which there was no trace of recognition.

Vain, all in vain, were her tactics. Rufus Clow was too honest-hearted himself to imagine the possibility of an intentional slight from another, and that other the child of his mother's sister long sleeping in her grave.

"How are ye, Cousin Mirandy?" he called out, in a tone of hearty interest, over the head of the small perfumed bit of dandyism, which, with an opera glass stuck in its eye, stared up at him with most profound astonishment and patrician disgust.

There was nothing for it now but to recognize her plebeian relative, which Miss Villers did very quietly, to avoid attracting the attention of those about her.

Although inwardly chafing at his audacity, as she mentally termed it, and saying to herself in her heart of hearts: "Fool! anybody but a country clown I could have cut with half the pains," she condescended to express the hope that he was enjoying the evening.

"Pretty fair," he rejoined, "but, coz, didn't we use to have jolly old times going a blueberrying, last summer? and wan't it great to see old Brindle kick you over the milking-stool? and didn't I laugh, fit to kill myself, that time I caught you a throwing hot water at the pigs, for the sake of seeing them tear round the pen, squealing like mad?"

While Miss Villers, with a glowing face, was replying in one freezing affirmative to all these queries, the small creature with a glass in its eye was moving off, with dainty tread, to escape the contamination of this vulgar presence which came "between *the air* and his gentility."

"But, Cousin Mirandy," persisted her unconscious tormenter, "what are we a standing here for, and all them fiddles a-going, up stairs? you are a-going to dance, ain't you?"

After a moment's hesitation, she replied in the negative, and boldly excusing herself, crossed the room to speak to a "dear friend" of whose presence she had suddenly become aware.

In a very bad humor was Miss Villers. She had come bent upon conquest; and instead of leading off in the first dance, with Mr. Eglistoun, as she had confidently reckoned upon doing, he, after the most casual greeting to herself, had gone away with her most formidable rival, Laura Avondale, on his arm.

In decidedly bad taste, she remarked to her "dear friend," for Miss Laura to appropriate the first eligible present, at her own party too, when she should be attending only to the comfort of her guests. Things were managed differently in Paris, *very*; but *Americans* had no delicacy of perception—no *tournure*.

And then to think that her very distant relative (the consanguinity seemed more than ever remote, just at this juncture) had managed to deprive her of the pleasure of dancing for the whole evening! Even if Mr. Eglistoun should ask her to waltz with him, she must decline. Was ever anything so provoking? In a moment of self-forgetfulness, she permitted her annoyance to make itself visible on her countenance, but instantly assumed a mask of haughty indifference as she felt the cold, searching glance of Elmeira Eglistoun fasten on her face.

Miss Eglistoun was somewhat proud and scornful of demeanor, but without a tinge of her brother's superciliousness. She was above dissimulation; and, deriving small pleasure from the scene in which she found herself, made no effort to *look* the satisfaction she did not really feel. A quiet scorn of those about her, perhaps even of herself, was in her dark glancing eyes; and those mobile lips of hers could turn a sarcastic period right spicily and well. So, her acquaintances, fearing the keenness of the wit with which her shafts were barbed, treated her with exaggerated politeness; one and all avoiding her when they might. Thus her restless spirit was *left to prey* on itself; and, at twenty-five, her *face already showed traces of* age.

From habit rather than inclination, she followed a round gaiety from which she reaped little pleasure. Dark in comp ion, thin of feature, tall and slight of figure, her whole attit was that of weariness and satiety.

Not far from her was the square, stout-built figure of Dea Brown, who, good old soul, regards the graceful exercise of da ing as one of the seven deadly sins; and had many a conse tious scruple as to the propriety of attending the present as bly. But, as he had intimate business relations with Mr. A dale, policy finally prevented his declining the invitation. sides, he kept himself as far as possible away from the pro sound of violincellos, devoutly hoping that none of his acqua ances might meet him thus countenancing by his presence a p tice he openly disapproved.

In this hope he was doomed to be disappointed; for the young Fred Bell, his own thoughtless nephew, whom he had ten felt called upon to reprove for general levity of demeanor, proached him with jubilant air.

"Ah! uncle Nathan, glad to see you have come out from strait-laced pharisees, and made up your mind to enjoy your for once, like a sensible man. Here, let me introduce you t partner."

The old man's face reddened with resentment at this irreve proposal, but recollecting where he was, his features relaxed he said, mildly, even humbly:

"A very pleasant social gathering, Fred; I have been hig edified by the conversation of several well informed person whom I have been kindly introduced."

The nephew had not the heart to persecute him farther.

For those who did not care to exercise the "light fant toe," or [possibly] lighter fantastic head for their own or general entertainment, there was the cool, fragrant conservat dimly lighted by a single swinging lamp.

For those who preferred a game at whist, the card tables laid out; while, in the music-room, just at the time of whic am writing, an amateur performer of no mean skill preside *the piano.* In obedience to his magic touch, flowed forth

lous notes, like the plaintive wail of sorrowing humanity; hey swell higher and higher, until the loud, clear tones of h ring forth in full harmonious cadence, and the soul of tener, borne upward on music's ethereal wings, soars to the ates of Harmony's golden temple, the inner sanctuary of none but glorified spirits may enter. Then slowly sinks rain of rapture, low and lower drooping earthward, until g away in those faint, thrilling murmurs which whisper to innermost spirit of mysteries fairer than life—than death sad by far.

th an air of dreamy abstraction the pianist turned toward teners.

ear me, what a pretty piece!" cried a round, dumpling-girl, who stood, blazing in jewelry, beside him. "I am Mr. Walgreen, you must spend an immense deal of time at iano, to finger so rapidly and so well. How many hours, lo you practice in a day?"

have no stated hours for practicing," was the cold reply.

eally! how *very* funny, when mamma would be *so* angry me if I didn't do my regular two hours' practicing every my life; but then it isn't so very bad as one would think, always lie my watch beside me, and only do fifteen minutes ime. Do you happen to know 'Peter Pickles,' the new song that is just out? The most charmingly absurd! I am sure you would sing it perfectly splendid, if you appened to know it."

professed utter ignorance of the song in question.

hen do, please, play us something lively."

th an expression which had in it something of scorn and npt, he turned on the stool, and ran his fingers rapidly he keys of the instrument, before quietly gliding into the an old-fashioned jig, with the lightest and most spark-ariations, immediately followed by the "Dancing-Jack ."

hut that door," cried a voice from an adjoining room. "I been twice *looed* on the ace, through the braying of that *ting instrument.*"

This last effort of the player was, as musical critics are to phrase it, rapturously encored.

"Who is he?" asked a young lady in tulle of one in wro lace, as Mr. Walgreen, taking the hand of a small boy, left piano.

"O, a well-looking person enough," was the careless re "but stone blind. So wealthy that he can afford to be ec tric, and eccentric sure enough he is; shutting himself up i miserable old wooden house, in a horrid back street, just bec a poor artist, of some kind or other, who had once taken of him in a severe fit of illness, happened to die there. C isn't it, for a gentleman who has been accustomed to boar at the Tremont?"

Flitting from room to room, entirely devoting herself to promotion of her guests' enjoyment, came and went the sere smiling, but well-nigh exhausted hostess; while Mr. Avond sadly bored, wearied, out of sorts, did the honors of his man worse than indifferently well—and with the ungracious air man who submits perforce to a disagreeable necessity.

It might not have been quite midnight when the whole pany descended to the refreshment-room, whose tables were tering with silver and crystal. Here were sparkling flowe colored ices, and tempting fruits in luscious West Indian je Festoons of roses and geraniums, intermingled with rare ex adorned the walls, filled the vases, and drooped from the deliers.

Now may the weary hostess rest from her labors, as num sable attendants leave her nothing to do in the way of suppl the wants of her guests.

Light sparkling wines—wines deliciously warmed and d ously cooled as well, are here in full measure. After t draining his glass, Mr. Avondale really begins to convers though he knew what he was talking about, which is more could be said of him at any previous portion of the evening.

Even the cold Miss Villers is thawed into something like ality, and, after having pronounced the flowery garlands " r-ming," and the charlotte-russe "*delicieuse*," condescend

discard the accent Parisian, and do her mother-tongue the honor of exclusive patronage. In the most charming of spirits is our stylish brunette, just at present, and with the best of reasons. The debilitated young lady who came with "that horrid Rufus Clow," has been so obliging as to faint away, and, on recovery, to beg him to take her home; so, the "distant relative" may be considered as fairly disposed of for the night. Miss Villers puts on a loftier air as she hugs this pleasing belief to her relieved heart. To heighten her felicity, Mr. Eglistoun is, for the moment, her devoted attendant, and has engaged her hand for the next waltz. After all, the evening will not be quite lost to her. Alas! what trifles have power to poison the cup of pleasure. Even in the giddy whirl of the dance, her eyes encountered those of Rufus Clow. He was the one Mordecai sitting in the way to her palace of enjoyment.

He followed her to the seat to which Mr Eglistoun conducted her.

"I am so glad," he said, with the most unsuspecting good faith, "that you altered your mind about dancing to-night; the old folks will be so proud to know that I danced with Cousin Mirandy."

With all her tact and assurance, here was a dilemma from which she was powerless to extricate herself. Amiably wishing him at the bottom of the Dead Sea, or any other place equally safe and secure, she submitted the tips of her dainty fingers to the clasp of the slate-colored *kids*, and suffered him to lead her forth for the next cotillion, inwardly vowing to cut him dead for the future, and firmly resolving to be "Not at home" to him, if he should call on her twenty times a day, during his stay in the city. So much for honest country cousins, laying claim to the acquaintance of wealthy and snobbish city relatives.

Pale, anxious, impatient to begone, a young wife and mother sits in the dressing-room, nervously tapping the floor with the toe of her satin boot. She thinks of the parched and burning skin, the fevered breath, of her only darling as she gave it a parting kiss, and longs once more to hold it in her arms, and be assured *of its safety*. It is already later than the hour at which

her husband promised to return home; the carriage is waiti for them; why does he not come or send for her?

She goes to the door of the dancing-room, and peeps furtive in. That is her husband—the tall, handsome gentleman wali ing with Miss Bennett. Her long curls sweep against his shou der, her head nearly reclines on the arm encircling her waist and her cheeks flush beneath the ardent gaze of her partne Mrs. Nichols' first impulsive resolve prompts her to go home i the waiting carriage by herself, leaving her husband to get hom as he best may; but no, there has never yet been unkindnes between them; she will control her impatience and wait, but no here, for these sounds fall too harshly on the heart of the mothe filled with inexpressible yearnings for her sick babe. Turnin away with a long-drawn breath which is nearly a sigh, she re turns once more to the dressing-room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONFIDENTIAL.

At a late hour in the night, or rather early hour in the mo ing, the last carriage whirled away, and Mrs. Avondale, tha ful to have said "Farewell" to her last departing guest, thr herself into an arm-chair, with a sigh of relief.

"You are weary, mamma," said Laura, passing her fair je elled arm about the neck of her mother.

"Yes, darling, sadly tired; are not you?"

"Not in the least; I could dance until morning with ea O, mamma, what a charming evening I have spent."

"I have had everything to attend to," said Mrs. Avondale, a tone of weariness; "for your papa hates parties, and so the care comes upon me. I was tired at the beginning of t evening, now I am exhausted."

"And all for me! You are the dearest mamma in t

world," said Laura, bending down so as to look lovingly into her mother's eyes. "This has been one of the pleasantest evenings of my life, and I owe it all to you. Did you see how I triumphed over that haughty, supercilious Miss Villers? Mr. Eglistoun would not even have escorted her down to the supper-table, if I had not particularly requested him to do so. You should have seen her dance with that awkward country cousin of hers. I wouldn't have been his partner to have saved his life. Miss Villers carried it out well, looking as composed as possible all the while; but I know her too well not to be sure that *that* dance was gall and wormwood to her proud spirit."

"Mr. Eglistoun," said Mrs. Avondale, without noticing her daughter's last observation, "has always divided his attentions pretty equally between Miss Villers and yourself. They mean nothing, I presume; I am not sorry to think so: I never trusted the man."

Laura's face flushed deeply. "I think you have mistaken him, mamma; at all events, he has taken sufficient pains to display his devotion to me, this evening. So soon after inviting me out to look at his beautiful house on the 'Neck,' too! and a perfect gem of a house it is; the blue-room, in particular, displays the most exquisite harmony of coloring, from the blue damask curtains to the turquoise match-box on the mantel. Then the paintings are the finest I ever saw. There was a holy family, a copy from Raphael, so lovely that I would have liked to have taken the sweet golden-haired child in my arms and kissed him. A statuette of Apollo, in bronze, I think I liked better than all the rest: it was really adorable—the very highest type of manly beauty, idealized into more than mortal loveliness. Will you not be proud to see your daughter the mistress of this charming home, which Miss Villers would give so much to preside over?"

Mrs. Avondale looked startled, and even anxious, as she asked: "Has Mr. Eglistoun proposed to you, Laura?"

"Not formally proposed, mamma, but—I think I understand him."

"Do you love this man, Laura?"

The fair face flushed more deeply than before.

"No one has ever spoken to me of love," she said with maidenly reserve; "but Mr. Eglistoun is not disagreeable to me. He is very dignified; but I do not think the less of him for that; I believe I should like a husband all the better for standing in a little wholesome awe of him. If he was so weak as to allow a woman to tyrannize over him, I could find it in my heart to play the tyrant right wilfully. No danger of that, with Mr. Eglistoun! At present he keeps me at a sort of a formal distance from him; of course this will wear away, on a nearer acquaintance. I know he has never been a favorite of yours, mamma; but think of the chilling influence to which he has always been submitted by a weak and selfish mother and a sister whose biting sarcasms everybody fears. You shall see how his pride will mellow down—how genial he will become under my potent influence."

The daughter's playful words conveyed but one idea to the mother.

"Then you have seriously decided to accept him, if he is serious, as you seem to suppose, in his intentions?" she queried with a look almost of dread on her face.

Laura looked up in utter surprise.

"Would you have me do otherwise, mamma?"

"Your happiness is dearer to me than any other consideration, my child; if I thought it would be promoted by a marriage with Mr. Eglistoun, I would advocate it with all my heart: 'tis only for your good I am anxious, Laura."

A troubled silence followed, which was broken by Laura's asking—

"Is not that papa, pacing so heavily back and forth, overhead?"

Mrs. Avondale nodded assent. Business troubled him, she said.

"Anything new?" Laura asked, with a start.

Yes, the mother replied, he had bought a ship, and sent her out to San Francisco with a cargo of dry goods; the market was found to be already overstocked, and the goods had not sold

for half their prime cost when imported here. To crown the misfortune, the sailors had deserted for the gold mines, and the ship might rot in port, before she could be manned for the homeward voyage.

"Dear me!" she continued, "what never-ending drudgery falls to my daily lot in this sort of life we are now leading. This house is twice too large for the number of servants we can afford to keep; and I have to make a slave of myself to keep things in anything like order. How much less time I find here for reading, walking, quiet social intercourse, than in our snug little home in High Street. Here is a jam, a string of inane, dawdling morning callers, or nobody. Then our expensive furnishings force us to retrench in other matters—our splendid footman turns up his nose at our everyday fare, and we have given up our one horse to save the paltry four dollars a week his keeping cost; although I sadly miss the pleasant drives through Brookline and Roxbury, which we used to enjoy so much. Real comfort is sacrificed for the sake of keeping up this splendid establishment. We have the shadow but not the substance of enjoyment—show and display, but no true happiness. Only look at these expensive entertainments your papa so thoroughly dislikes. I enjoyed those evenings when a dozen of our friends dropped in, without ceremony, and we offered them a plate of cake or fruit with a glass of iced water or lemonade, a thousand times better than all this fuss and display. Those were the days when we *had* friends. How many of the selfish fashionables who honored our poor assembly with their lofty presence, to-night, care for us one straw, think you, at heart? If we were beggared, to-morrow, how many of them would extend us a helping hand, or even so much as recognize us in our fallen fortunes?"

"O mamma, do not conjure up such gloomy visions," pleaded Laura with a troubled air.

"I cannot endure to see your father so harrassed with business cares," said Mrs. Avondale with tremulous lips. "I would not have given this last party if I had not sent out the invitations before learning our California losses. Let us go back to the old house, and *give up all these* superfluities that cost him so dearly,

and which, I do verily believe, we should be quite as l
out."

"Not yet," remonstrated Laura; "think how l
would sneer at the low-ceiled rooms,—too low for
paintings;—and Mr. Eglistoun's splendid turn-out, h
look drawn up before an eighteen-foot brick front! He
only wait a little, and he shall assist papa; I wi
my first request. You are weary, poor darling, that
son that everything looks so dark to you. I am a
keeping you up so late; here is a good-night kiss unti
you must not think of getting up to breakfast."

Scarcely twelve hours had elapsed since Mr. Eglist
the Avondales, when he once more presented himself
of their mansion. Enquiring particularly for Miss
alone descended to receive him. His stay was short,
diately after his departure, Laura ran nimbly up to h
dressing-room. Her cheeks were flushed, and her ey
with delight.

"He has proposed, and I have referred him to pap
see, he is not the mere flirt you mistook him for," we
impulsive words. "And now look at this lovely é
of oriental design. I am enchanted with it. See th
real pearls; he clasped the bracelet on my arm hi
ear-rings and brooch, aren't they superb? and the b
dants from the hair-pins? Generous as a princ
mamma?"

Mrs. Avondale bowed a ready assent, but still t
cloud of anxious care on her brow. It did not escap
perception that Laura seemed less engrossed with
proposals than with the costly gift by which they w
panied

"Bought with a price," the mother could hardly r
crying aloud But then she might be mistaken in he
sions as to Mr. Eglistoun's want of real regard for he
whom she would not needlessly grieve by insinuating
the vague dislike and mistrust she had always entertai
her suitor.

"He is as disinterested as generous," resumed Laura, thinking aloud, for from her mother she had no concealments. "He knows of papa's business troubles; I told him of them myself, and he said it was only myself he wanted, nothing more. Doesn't that show the noble disposition of the man? when there is Miss Villers, an heiress in her own right, who would move heaven and earth to win him from me? How I shall enjoy seeing these magnificent pearls eclipse her rubies in their heavy antique settings! I have not forgotten her overbearing airs to me, when I was less sure of my position in society than I am now."

"Laura."

She raised her eyes from the jewelry she had been fondling, with a look of startled surprise at the grave, impressive tone in which her name had been pronounced.

"My child, do not let so paltry a motive as a desire to mortify or outshine Miss Villers have any influence over your decision to refuse or accept one from whom, once accepted, death alone can release you. Consult your own heart rather than your interest. If Mr. Eglistoun were a poor man, would you be so ready to bind yourself to him for life?"

"I am glad he isn't poor, at all events, for I like elegant and luxurious appointments: I have no taste for poverty." And she shrugged her shoulders, glancing in an opposite toilette-glass at the interlaced pearls on her snowy neck. See how papa is harassed, and how you work, and save, and deny yourself, all from lack of fortune. As for me, right glad shall I be to escape such petty trials. But I must go and dress now, for Mr. Eglistoun promised to call for me, directly after dinner, to go and look at a design for some silver plate he is having manufactured to order. He has gone to papa's counting-room, now; a mere form, of course, this asking papa's consent to our engagement, which he will never think of opposing."

Mrs. Avondale fell into an attitude of deep thoughtfulness after her daughter's departure.

"We came here for the sake of Laura's advantage," she said to herself; "would it not have been better for all of us if we had remained in the old home, where we had plenty of comforts

if few needless luxuries—where we were united and happy, and our only child was not exposed to that taint of worldliness which has blighted many a life of fairest promise?"

While Laura, in the best of spirits, was making a most captivating toilette, Mr. Eglistoun was closeted in confidential *tête-à-tête* with his pale-faced sister.

"Well, Elmeira," he began, "I have selected the mistress of the new house—the future Mrs. Eglistoun; a domestic establishment is nothing without an elegant and graceful woman to preside over it."

"Ah!" (in her most sarcastic accents) "a sort of legalized upper housekeeper, to give respectability to the new mansion!—at least, I understand you to allude to the mistress of your house and name, not of your heart. Who is to have that honor?"

"I am engaged to Miss Avondale," he replied coldly, without seeming to notice anything peculiar in his sister's question. "Do you approve my choice?" he added, in a tone proving the speaker to be quite indifferent as to the reply, whatever it might be.

"Not wholly," returned Elmeira. "I would have been better pleased if you had chosen Miss Villers."

"Your reasons, if you please."

"Because she is a more thorough-bred woman of fashion than Miss Avondale—has less sensibility and more worldly wisdom. If her husband neglected her, she would find a thousand ways of consoling herself, where Laura would pine away with mortification and regret."

"But why should I neglect so beautiful a creature as my affianced bride is universally acknowledged to be? I shall be proud to display her charms at home and abroad—at concert and opera room—at private parties and fashionable watering places. Neglect her, indeed! what put such an absurd idea into your head, Elmeira?"

"You cannot deceive me, Grahame. You tell me of your engagement in the same cold unmoved tone as you would adopt in informing me of the purchase of a new piece of statuary. You

; at all in love with Miss Avondale, *that* is clearly evident.
s, all her life long, been accustomed to daily and hourly
stations of the tenderest regard from a mother who doats
; from a husband, will she expect less?"
ha! Elmeira, romantic nonsense from you, of all persons
world! I am sure *you* get along well enough without be-
erlastingly petted and pussied over, why should not the
Mrs. Eglistoun do the same, like a sensible woman, as
"

eira colored faintly, and bit her lip without reply.
ssure you," he resumed, "that Miss Laura knows very
at she is about. Her father has met with severe pecu-
osses lately, she told me so herself, and proposes a rigid
hment of household expenses; and she is by no means in-
to despise the luxurious home I am able to offer her. I
ever 'made love to her,' as the phrase goes, and she cer-
cannot expect the husband to be more devoted than the
as proved himself. I have commenced as I intend to pro-
and I am by no means apprehensive as to the result. Miss
whom you seem to prefer as a sister-in-law, is showy and
, I admit, but not nearly as beautiful as my Laura, who
nearly faultless in figure, feature, and complexion."
his assertion Elmeira unhesitatingly assented, and the con-
on was permitted by both to flow onward in a different
l.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GAINING WISDOM BY EXPERIENCE.

VARD, step by step, Jane More wearily climbed the thorny
f convalescence. She began to suffer now from a constant
g for food, which craving the prudent physician dared not,
e, wholly gratify. This prudence was not in the least ap-

preciated by his patient, who, at his every call, grew more and more importunate in her entreaties for "something to eat."

"How will a couple of sweet-water grapes suit your palate?" he one day asked in answer to her repeated importunities.

"Only a couple!" she repeated, with a look of pathetic reproach.

"A very fair beginning, I take it, Miss More, for one whose digestive aparatus is as thoroughly out of practice as yours has become."

With this opinion Jane did not coincide; and made bold to aver her belief that starvation was the most miserable system of practice that was ever adopted.

However, the two grapes proved to be delicious, and were partaken with infinite relish. Jane saw also where the paper containing the remainder of them was laid, and resolved to brave the doctor's wrath by procuring an addition to her stinted repast, at the first opportunity that presented itself. Chance favored her design. Ellen went down to the kitchen to prepare some barley-water, and, exerting all her energies, Jane crawled out of bed upon a chair, thence descending to the floor. Across the room, on her hands and knees, she laboriously made her way; once her head swam and she fell forward on her face, but, pulling herself up by the rung of a chair, she resolutely pursued her way to the little table—the goal of her desires. At last it was reached, and clinging to its side with one hand, with the other she abstracted from the paper of grapes a luscious bunch, and safely retreated with her prize. The getting into bed again proved a more laborious process than the getting out had been; but at last the difficult feat was successfully achieved, and the purloining of the grapes was a fact accomplished. But the moment of triumph is not always the happiest of one's life. Jane's strength was exhausted; her limbs trembled violently, while everything in the room seemed dancing in little circlets about her, and her hard-won prize dropped from her powerless grasp. Not thus was she to be balked of her purpose; quiet brought composure, and with it strength to raise the coveted grapes to her thirsting lips. When Ellen returned, only the denuded stalk remained as a tro-

phy of the invalid's exploit. The succeeding night was literally spent in groanings and lamentations. Next morning found her a sadder and a wiser woman, with no disposition to cavil at the meagre bill of fare Dr. Johnde submitted for the day.

Gradually the cravings of a morbid appetite abated; and then came a restless desire for change.

"Dear me," she said to the doctor, "this chamber seems so dreary! why, the very paper on the walls seems sickly and melancholy; I do really believe I should feel better, and be better, anywhere else than in this deplorable room.

"The room is well enough, it is only that you have not strength and spirits to appreciate it," he confidently rejoined. "Only wait a week or two, and you will find yourself as jolly here as a sparrow in a hedge."

But Jane in this, as in most other matters, had an opinion of her own, and persisted in telling Ellen, after the doctor's departure, that it was enough to tire a person to death to be always in the same place.

"Dear me," she cried, with something of the old pettishness, which, with all her endeavors, she found so difficult to subdue, "it is no wonder, in bed morning, noon and night, that I ache in every limb. Now, if I could only get to the couch, for awhile, it would be something like. I don't mean to have it trundled up here, as it is when the bed is made; but I should like to lie on it where it is, so that I can look out at the window, and get a glimpse of the children playing about the court."

After considerable persuasion, Ellen consented to humor her whim; and with some difficulty assisted the feeble convalescent upon her feet. Poor Jane, it was so long since she had borne her own weight, that her knees knocked together; and in attempting to walk, a great giddiness came upon her, and she had nearly fallen to the floor, dragging Ellen along with her.

The exertion of preserving her upright position brought on pain and fever, and she sank almost senseless upon the couch, faintly gasping forth:

"O, if I were but back in bed again."

Ellen, alarmed, ran out upon the landing and called to Max-

gery, who speedily appeared, wiping her wet hands on the skirt of her dress.

"Do you not think," the former hurriedly asked, "that w could manage, between us, to lift Jane upon the bed again?"

"Bless yer swate face, an' it's meself, jist, will do that mam as aisy as though the young misthress was no more nor a yea old babby," replied the self-confident Margery. And, before Ella had time to give any directions for the careful performance o her task, she had whisked up the scarcely conscious sufferer i her brawny arms, turned round so swiftly as to come within hair's-breadth of dashing the head of her helpless charge again a corner of the bureau, and, in swerving aside to avoid this co lision, brought Jane's shoulders in violent contact with the litt medicine-table, overturning cups and breaking phials, so that t air of the room became speedily pervaded with an odor like th of a druggist's shop.

"Sthop the money out of me wages, to pay for the mischie muttered the crest-fallen Margery, as, with no gentle motio she popped Jane into bed, leaving her to her own reflectio which resulted in a firm determination not to venture again fro said bed without express permission from the doctor.

It was about this time that a change began to make itself p ceptible in the condition of Mr. More.

He partially regained the use of his limbs, but was still unal to move his head; and, as the muscles of his throat remain paralyzed, he could neither speak, nor swallow anything mo substantial than liquid aliment. The doctor declared him to in a very critical and alarming state, during whose continuan some violent physical reaction was to be momentarily app hended; and desired that he should not be left for an instant himself.

Thus it was, that Aunt Huldah became a fixture in the s man's room; and the brow-beaten shop-boy rejoiced in be freed from her unwelcome surveillance. Even Jane, dee anxious as she was for her father's fate, could not but feel re at her aunt's continued absence from her room. As the sl progressing convalescent became gradually capable of connec

ought, Ellen commenced the practice of reading aloud to her, short intervals, as she could bear it. Sometimes it was a few rses from that best gift of God to man—the Bible—at others, light and cheerful paragraph of her own composition; for she d still found time, in occasional spare moments, to jot down r thoughts as they rose. Not only this, but she had also conived to indite a long epistle, from Margery's dictation, to her other in "ould Ireland," winding up with—"Something swate, ye plase, Miss, to me own foorsht coosin, that jewel of a boy, at Rooney, that ain't a bit of a relation to meself only be me nother's foorsht marriage, an' sure."

One afternoon when Jane happened to be unusually comfortable, a scrap of paper was put into Ellen's hand, on which was written:

"Dear Nellie, I am miserable in health and spirits. Come to me, for a couple of hours, as soon as you can possibly be spared.

ELVIRA."

On consulting with Jane, it was decided that Ellen should at once obey the summons; and, after many injunctions to Margery regarding the invalid, she sped on her way.

How strange seemed the noise and glare of the street, after the quiet, subdued light of the darkened room she had so lately left!

In passing the house of the Rev. Augustus Roselif, she was surprised to see quite a concourse of carriages drawn up in front of it. Mr. Trueburn ran down the steps, and met her with a cordial greeting.

"I hope nothing has happened to the family here," said Ellen, glancing up at the thronged hall of the clergyman's dwelling.

"Nothing of unusual occurrence," he carelessly replied. "Mr. Roseliff, if I am rightly informed, has received a call, with an offer of increased salary, from a wealthy congregation in a southern city; and, having accepted the same, he very naturally disposes of his furniture at auction. By the way, as you tell me you are going directly to Mrs. Leroy, if it is no trouble to your-

self, please make my compliments to that good lady, and say to her that if she wishes to procure a mate to the pretty easy-chair in her parlor, she can probably obtain one to-morrow at the sales-room of Leonard & Co., as they have just purchased an article of that description. Let me hear from you as soon as convenient, in a *professional* way," he added, raising his hat in parting salutation.

"I shall be sure and forget his message to Elvira," Ellen smilingly assured herself, as she pursued her way.

"O, Ellen, this is very kind of you," cried Elvira, covering her face with her hands as the former entered the room.

It was the first time Ellen had ever seen her shed tears, other than those of spite or policy: and instantly her heart warmed toward the sorrowing wife. Throwing aside her bonnet and shawl, she approached Elvira, who was lying on the lounge, and raising her head (the satin pillow had been cast aside as too fine for every-day use), sat down and drew it gently upon her lap.

"What is it, Elvira? some new trouble, or are you really ill?"

"Not exactly ill, Ellen, but far from well, and in miserably low spirits."

"I am afraid you have not been out, as much as you ought for air and exercise. I thought you would have been over or to have seen your sister."

"I know—poor Jane! she is too cross to me, and, when everybody is sick abed in the house, it seems rather a poor place to go to cheer one's self up. Besides, the walk would have been too long for me, as I scarcely go in the street at all now. Indeed, I do not even go to the public table; and lonesome enough I am here all by myself, morning, noon and night."

"Why, at least you have your husband with you every evening."

"Sometimes he stays in of an evening; but, O Ellen, he is changed, so changed! not like the same man he was six months ago. Gloomy, always gloomy, he is now. I haven't seen a smile, I can't tell when. Worst of the whole, he doesn't seem to take the least interest in anything. I thought he would

ter after gaining his case in that law-suit with Mr. Avon-
e"——

"Then he won the case!"

"Yes; that is, he got back the money he paid for the goods; he didn't seem as much pleased about it as I expected he uld be. I believe other things have gone wrong at the store, e then. There was a salesman Laurence wanted to dismiss ietime ago, but Mr. Chapley wasn't quite willing to part with ı; and so they kept him until he stole ever so much from m—I'm sure I can't tell how, for I don't understand business tters in the least—I often wish I knew as much about them you do, and then perhaps Laurence would feel more like talk- to me about his affairs."

There was an uneasy silence of some moments, broken by en's inquiring what became of the dishonest clerk.

"He was supposed to have sailed for Europe, I believe; but urence talked with me so little about it, that I hardly know at ever became of him. Do you remember, Ellen, how bent on getting away from Laramont's Laurence was, at one time? ll, I proposed, the other day, that we should try to get arded in a small private family, hoping that would please n; but he took no notice of it whatever, and hasn't mentioned since. I half wish he had stuck to his trade, and I had either ide up my mind to stay in the old house, or have moved o the small brick one he wished me to look at; for I'm aid this new business doesn't agree with him; and I am owing sick of a public boarding-house myself. The noise kes my head ache, now I am less strong than I was; and ople here don't care anything about one who is dull and out spirits: nobody ever comes near me now."

"Why, where are your old friends, Miss Bennett and Miss ttigrew, all this time that you are so much by yourself?"

"O, Miss Pettigrew is all taken up, now, with what Mr. True- rn calls the 'spiritualism humbug.' She and Mr. Bennett are r ever squeezing each others' hands across a little table that on't either rap or tip, with all their coaxing. Then, Miss Ben- tt doesn't seem to care much for me now I'm in trouble; be-

sides, she seems quite bewitched with a new friend, a Miss Villers, whom we met at the party on the night when Laurence says I was so unkind and unjust to you. I'm sure I didn't mean it, but I was so out of sorts, I must find fault with something. I am truly sorry for it, and I hope you have forgotten it, long before this."

It was not in Ellen's nature to forget what, at the time, had so strongly moved her, but with perfect sincerity she replied, "I have not in my heart an unkind feeling toward you, Elvira, not one."

"Thank you, Ellen, that is like you. I did not know how kind and forbearing you were, until you went away, and I saw how differently others treated me. How much better a wife you would have made Laurence than I have done. Why did he not find this out, in all those years you were under the same roof with him?"

Ellen blushed vividly at this abrupt question, but her voice was calm and clear as she replied:

"I was like a younger sister to him, and surely he may grant me a brother's regard without lessening in the least the dearer love he bears his wife. You know I am a stray waif in the world, Elvira, and your husband is the only long-tried friend I have."

"O, Ellen, you haven't forgotten that night—you haven't forgiven me?"

"Fully and freely, Elvira, as I hope to be forgiven. Now let us talk of something else. You were speaking to me of Miss Bennett's new friend."

"Ah, yes; I was going to say that I went into Miss Bennett's room, one morning, without having the remotest idea of finding any one else there. I do not know whether it was because I was not as nicely dressed as usual, (Adelphine has come in here many the day looking ten times worse), or what was the reason, but she did not think proper to introduce me to Miss Villers, who happened to be calling at the time. I wouldn't have minded the not being introduced so much, as a great many people pretend that introductions aren't fashionable, but Miss Bennett scarce

poke a word to me, though she was full of pleasant chat to Miss Villers; and her looks said to me, plainly enough, 'I wish you'd kept away.' I wished so too, and I wouldn't have stayed a minute only I didn't want her to think I went off mad, and I couldn't think of any excuse for getting out, just the minute I'd got in there. Miss Villers happened to mention that she hadn't lunched, and should feel much better after she had done so.

"Good Lord! (excuse me, I mustn't use that word, I forgot), such a fuss as there was! Sandwiches and cold chicken, cake and wine, weren't good enough for the daughter of a dumpy old millionaire; but a servant must be sent off, post-haste, for grapes, ice-creams and what not. Miss Bennett, to be sure, did just pass the compliment of inviting me to stay and lunch with them, but she did not even look at me, and her voice was enough to freeze one. Of course I made a bold push, and got out of it the best way I could; I've never been in there since. While I was carefully drawing the door to after me, I overheard Miss Villers say she knew a Mr. Leroy—a carpenter papa sometimes employed to do odd jobs about the house—quite well, by sight, and asked if I was a relative of his. Dear me! I'm sick and tired of trying to go with people who can afford to live in a great deal better style than I can. One may run one's legs off for them, and they will think one well paid for one's trouble, by the honor of their acquaintance. It is so pleasant to put yourself out for people, and get more cuffs than thanks for your pains. To think, after all I have done for Adelphine, that she should go and turn me the cold shoulder, for the sake of that overbearing Miss Villers, who isn't the least bit agreeable, and expects as much waiting upon, as though she were queen of the realm. Hereafter I will try and get acquainted with people who will not think they lower their dignity so much by knowing me, that I cannot do enough, or bear enough, to repay their condescension. But I am keeping the talk all to myself, Ellen, without giving you a chance to get a word in edgewise. Do I weary you?"

Ellen declared herself better pleased to be listener than speaker, and thus encouraged, Elvira resumed:

"I think Miss Bennett has to pay pretty dearly for t of knowing Miss Villers; for her three younger sisters to spend the day with Adelphine, as often as their nur erness goes away for that length of time. Such acti as they are too! They ransack her drawers, waste fumery, and gobble down everything in the shape of a that they can ferret out in her closets. So particula Bennett is too! I'd like to see any other children tr off any such pranks in her rooms. She brought them in here, and left them awhile, one day. How they l over from head to foot! and then giggled in each oth Then they walked about, examining everything and v to each other. Finally they concluded to express thei aloud, which they did by saying that this was rather sort of a room, but they couldn't possibly sleep in suc able little hole as my chamber, with only one wash-bow two towels on the stand.

"Next they fell to asking just the sort of question care to answer, such as:—

Did I keep a waiting-maid? Then who took ca clothes and my room? (quite turning up their noses w them I did my own sweeping and dusting.)

Where was I educated? Did I go to boarding-sch I have a governess at home? What! neither spea paint, nor play on the piano! No accomplishments Where was I brought up? What street did my fath How many servants did he keep? Only one! why six, beside their governess. I met the young inquisi thread store with their sister, next day, and they all me, impudent as you please; but not one of them gav of having ever seen me before."

Elvira had never seemed so cordially communicat *near* to Ellen, as on this afternoon. She began to loo to brighter hours for all, in the future. Removed from house influence, which could but be pernicious to a mi and ill regulated as that of Mrs. Leroy, Ellen hoped t better emotions and impulses of her nature awakene

ınd gradually won from his gloom and despondency, in the
s of domestic quiet for which he pined.
ıs, for the vanity of human imaginings!

CHAPTER XXV.

ALONE ON LIFE'S TROUBLED WATERS.

was nearly sundown when Ellen proposed returning to

Not yet," remonstrated Elvira; "wait until after tea, and
ence shall walk home with you. By the way, speaking of
ence, he was not at home to dinner to-day; I hope there is
w trouble at the store."
e hour for tea arrived, but no Mr. Leroy. Ellen strove to
Elvira's anxiety, although strongly sharing the same her-
Neither of them went down to the table.
was nearly eight o'clock when there came a sharp, impera-
ap at the door. Ellen shook with a vague feeling of dread,
e crossed the room, in obedience to the summons. Both
en turned deadly pale when Mr. Chapley came in alone.
Where is Leroy?" he cried with eager haste; "I must see
and that at once."
Why, isn't he at the store?" asked Elvira, with tremulous

At the store! no, indeed, not since four o'clock, when he
this last blow was more than he could bear, and rushed into
treet, as I supposed for home."
What last blow?" asked Elvira, in low gasping tones.
Why, hasn't he told you that our note lay over at the bank
y?—that there is an officer in our store?—that we are
rupt—ruined? I only hope that, in the first violent fit of
eration, he may not have gone and committed some rash
some deed—"

The sentence was never concluded, for Elvira sank back on the lounge in strong convulsions.

During the instant of shocked surprise in which the dismayed speaker viewed the effect of his own revelation, Mr. Leroy, with dishevelled hair, soiled clothing, and boots wet and splashed with mire, suddenly entered the room, and, without a word to any one, took his wife in his arms and bore her to her bed.

All night long, there were sounds of hurrying footsteps, up and down, in and out, at Laramont's—of hurried consultations, and sharp, whispered orders to attendant messengers, ever accompanied by the warning words—"Quick! be quick!"

Vain! all vain! All has been done that human skill may do, and yet, at morning's light, breaks on the ear the feeble wail of a fragile infant, which will never know the sound of a mother's voice, for Elvira is stiff and stark in her winding-sheet.

Beside the bed on which she rests too well, ah, too well, sits her husband, with face deep buried in his hands. Who now shall approach with words of sweet consolement? The deep bitterness of his heart who can tell?

With Ellen's quick, imaginative nature, she comprehended more clearly than any other could have done the morbid self-reproaches to which he was actually yielding himself the prey. In the presence of death, "the great atoner," how changed the light shed over the past!—the irremediable past! How cold, and hard, and stern, he now felt himself to have been toward those girlish follies which should have claimed his tenderest forbearance. Where her tastes and aims in life had shown themselves different from his own, how little effort had he made to reconcile them, and bring them into sweetest accord. Why was it that in her life, so brief, so suddenly brought to an untimely end, her youth had not thus risen up in extenuation of her many faults? Assuredly the grave hides the faults of its tenants, while the memory of their virtues grows brighter in its shadow.

Gradually a sense of intolerable pain makes itself felt in the throbbing head and burning temples of the bereaved watcher. This is succeeded by a heavy, numbing ache in the whole region of the brain. A shadowy indistinctness is over all things

'ague images of dread throng his bewildered vision, like the dis-
empered fancies of a dream. He was no longer sufficiently
apable of coherent thought, to be assailed by the fear of losing
is senses.

In the next room, a pale, thin woman, in mourning calico,
enderly hushed the puny babe in her arms. The careful nurse
s no other than Mrs. Ames. Knowing how gladly she would
epay the obligations she owed Ellen, Dr. Johnde had procured
ler services, early in the night. He is now talking with Ellen,
vhose eyes are red and swollen with much weeping.

"Poor girl," he says, in compassionate tone, "care and watch-
ng seem to fall to your lot, in double measure. And now I am
about to lay a fresh burden upon you—a charge which will tax
your energies to the uttermost, for many long weeks to come. I
would gladly relieve you from a portion of the responsibility, if
t were in my power; but constant watchfulness and tender
nursing will do more, in this case, than the best medical advice
n the world."

Ellen looked up apprehensively. "Will it be so very difficult,
hen, to rear the child?"

"The child is a miserably puny little morsel of humanity;
and I doubt if the best nursing in the world can long keep it
alive; but 'tis not of the babe, but of its father, I would speak.
He is in a very critical state. All his energies must have been
sorely over-taxed, and he is thoroughly exhausted, body and
mind. What he needs, and must have, in order to escape the
danger of falling into a rapid decline, is perfect rest, perfect
quiet, freedom from thought, and freedom from action. The
sooner you remove from here the better: a noisy boarding-
house is no place for a man in his condition."

Ellen stood looking in his face with a vacant stare: the great
shock of this sudden communication, for the moment, numbed all
her faculties of perception. She saw that the doctor's lips moved
as though he were still speaking, but not a word did she hear.
It was the melancholy sound of surging waters that alone smote
on her ear. The memory of those forlorn days on the sea came
vividly before her, as it ever did in moments of deep and painful

emotion like the present. Once more she was alone on th waste of waters, the only friend whose arm could have l succor stricken powerless by her side, the white foam ch from his bloodless lips. Now it was the sea of life on whi felt herself helplessly drifting, with none to pilot her throu perilous depths.

"As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." It was the of her own spirit which whispered the divine promise, and light of hope came again to her eyes.

"Do you approve my arrangement?" asked Dr. Johnde, emphasis.

"I—I don't think I exactly understand what it is," Ellen plied, with a little embarrassment.

"Why, that you should break the news of her sister's deat to Miss More: it must be done very cautiously; and I shoul be sorry to have the poor child learn it from that tart aunt of hers. I can spare my gig, in the course of an hour, and I will send a stable-boy to drive you over, if that will suit your convenience."

Ellen assented, with thanks. In appearance, she was calm and gravely composed. For others' sake she must acquire a degree of firmness and self-reliance quite foreign to her timid and shrinking nature. A heavy burden has descended upon her feeble shoulders, and, without wasting her powers in useless fears and misgivings, she will bear it bravely up, with what strength is given her.

A single ray of light is thrown over the gloom in which her life-path has so suddenly lost itself, by the thought that she must now live for others, and her hopes and aims no longer centre in self alone. To the person of purely selfish impulses, the higher and nobler forms of happiness are never known.

"Gig waiting for Miss Verne," called out a servant, tapping at the door, not long after Dr. Johnde's departure.

"Very well, I will be down directly," responded Ellen, hurrying on her bonnet and shawl with that intent. But, as she stepped out into the corridor, two men confronted her, almost at th very threshold.

"Is this Mr. Leroy's room?" asked the elder and more gentlemanly appearing of the twain.

Ellen replied affirmatively.

"Then I must see him directly, on business of importance."

"Wouldn't it answer your purpose as well, sir, to see his partner, Mr. Chapley?"

"No; our business is solely with Mr. Leroy."

"Then your business must be deferred to a more convenient season," Ellen firmly rejoined.

"What! and allow our debtor to dispose of his effects at his leisure, and give us the slip at last; no, Miss, that don't square with our ideas of justice at all, so step aside a moment, if you please, and allow us to enter."

"I have always heard," remonstrated Ellen with desperate courage, "that Boston merchants were celebrated for their clemency to the unfortunate; surely, no creditor of Mr. Leroy's could be so cruel as to intrude upon him in an hour like this—an hour of sorrow and bereavement. Leave him, if you have the hearts of men in your bosoms; pray leave him alone with his dead, till he has time to bury her out of his sight. It is the body of his wife he is watching over; and the doctor says he is in a critical state himself; and must be kept very quiet and free from care."

The two men conferred together for a little space apart, while, agitated and breathless, she awaited the result of their conference.

"All a contrived plan to gain time for escape," reached her ear, from the more sinister looking of the two individuals.

His companion turned toward her.

"We have no reason to doubt your word, Miss, not the least, but then, we officers of justice are so used to all kinds of impositions, that we seldom trust anything but our own senses; so, we will even take a look at the rooms ourselves, and if affairs are as bad as you say, why—then—we will be governed by circumstances."

Ellen made a movement as if to step aside, but a sudden giddiness, the effect of strong excitement, compelled her to lean against the door for support.

A momentary feeling of compassion at sight of the wan misery of her face, and her hands clasped in a sort of mute despair, prevented the two men from attempting to force their way past her.

The sound of a voice which had something familiar in its tones made her cast her eyes along the corridor whence it came. A quick glow came to her cheek. It was Mr. Eglistoun, who, in company with Mr. Melville, seemed approaching her. Some intuitive consciousness, too subtle to be defined, warned her ever against this man. She would sooner have died than have thrown herself on his kindness for protection or aid. Better trust to the mercy of those who sought access to Mr. Leroy than seek *his* counsel.

Reluctantly and with downcast eyes, she stepped aside to permit the entrance of those she was powerless to oppose.

"Good morning, Miss Verne; can I be of any service to Mr. Leroy in his great trouble?"

Ellen turned her head quickly, to see Mr. Eglistoun with his companion ascending the second flight of stairs, but it was neither of them who had addressed her.

"O, Mr. Trueburn," she cried, laying her hand in his with a sigh of relief, "I am in sore need of advice and assistance. The doctor says Mr. Leroy cannot attend to business affairs without putting his life in jeopardy, and these gentlemen seem determined to force themselves into his presence."

"I am only acting in obedience to the lawyer's orders," said the elder of the two men, in answer to a questioning glance from Mr. Trueburn. "You see, sir, a man wants his honest dues; and, when he fails to get them himself, he is apt to throw the disagreeable task of collecting them on us poor ministers of justice. It's no such mighty matter, though, that has brought me here this morning; merely to put an attachment on a few superfluous articles of furniture, as I understand it, and place this man as keeper over them, to prevent their falling into the hands of other creditors, until it is convenient for Mr. Leroy to part with them. You see, sir, that the whole affair has been arranged with a view to *his* convenience in the matter."

Mr. Trueburn turned, with a quick look of surprised interrogation, to Ellen.

"Yes," she sadly replied, "they failed yesterday. It was the news of *that*, abruptly brought—"

A choking in the throat abruptly concluded the sentence, while her swollen eyes brimmed over with tears.

Mr. Trueburn turned to the officer.

"Surely, sir, there must be some way of arranging an affair like the present, without encroaching on the privacy of a family, in its first hours of bereavement too, by placing a stranger as a spy over its action."

"Undoubtedly," replied the deputy sheriff stiffly, for the word "spy" had not a pleasant sound to his ear—"undoubtedly there is a way, sir, if any friend of the family is willing to take the responsibility."

"I will take the responsibility, in the most stringent form you think proper to devise," hastily interposed Mr. Trueburn.—"Draw up a bond, if you like, making me responsible for the safe delivery of the furniture or its money equivalent, at a specified time, and I will sign the same."

"Gig waiting for Miss Verne," said a chambermaid, approaching them.

"She will be down as soon as possible," returned Mr. Trueburn, dismissing the messenger with an imperative wave of the hand.

Then to the officer: "Is my proposal accepted, sir?"

"I do not think it the wisest mode of procedure, under the circumstances. You see, if I take your bond, as proposed, you become responsible to the prosecutor for the full value of the furniture in question; but what is to prevent some other creditor from coming and carrying it off? thus forcing you to pay its value, without in the least benefitting your friend, which, I take it, is your main object. I think I have a better plan to propose. Is this young lady a member of the family?"

"She is."

"What name? if you please."

"Miss Ellen Verne."

"Is there any other permanent resident with the family just now?"

Ellen mentioned Mrs. Ames.

"Very well; if you, sir, will step over with me to the lawyer's office—'tis but a minute's walk from here—we will have papers drawn up constituting Mrs. Ames and Miss Verne legal keepers of the furniture, an inventory of which you will allow me to take, so that, so long as either of them is on the premises, other creditors can do nothing. It will be only through carelessness on their part, in both leaving the house at once, that you can be compelled to pay the amount of the bond we shall require of you in case of any contingency that may arise."

This proposal, being approved by all parties, was carried into effect as speedily as might be. Mr. Trueburn had cut short Ellen's fervent expressions of gratitude, by hastily retreating to his own bachelor apartment somewhere in the upper regions of the house, and she was rapidly traversing the corridor when some one plucked her shawl from behind.

"I have heard of your sad bereavement," cried Miss Bennett, for she it was who had thus arrested Ellen's progress; "and I should have been in to see if I could be of any use to you, before now, only Miss Viller's birth-night ball comes off to-night, and I have had so many commissions to execute for her that I have neglected my own preparations till the last minute, and I can scarcely take time to breathe to-day."

Ellen intimated that she, also, had not a moment to lose; and would have passed on, but Miss Bennett detained her.

"After to-day, if I can be of any service to you in buying your mourning or anything of that kind, for, of course, etiquette will scarcely permit of your going shopping before the funeral, I shall be most happy to place myself at your disposal."

Ellen gave a single yearning glance, beseeching sympathy, at the unmoved face of the speaker, and reading thereon an expression controlled by the coldest conventualism, turned sadly away, with a heart too full for words.

"Now I think of it," pursued Miss Bennett, "I should like some little keepsake as a remembrance of my friendship for Mrs.

Leroy—the little gold cross and chain she wore about her neck, or a ring, bracelet, or anything of the kind that will answer as a souvenir, I am not particular what it is."

"O, Ellen, I am so glad to have you back again, it's not the same place when you are away," cried Jane, in feeble but earnest tones, a ray of pleasure lighting up her thin, sunken face, as she welcomed back her whilom nurse.

"I bring you very sad news, Jane; do you think you can bear to be told at once?"

There was no reply; but Ellen felt the hand she had tenderly taken in her own grow cold in her clasp.

"I parted from Dr. Johnde but a little while before I started," Ellen resumed, hoping gradually to approach the dreaded communication she had to make.

Jane turned very white.

"Does he think it best that I should be told? Does he still think me in a rapid decline?"

"It has nothing to do with yourself, Jane—the bad news that I bring. You have a little niece *living*—and—and I have not been asleep since I left here."

"Elvira! tell me of her."

"Be calm, Jane, our grief can do her no good now: she will never know earthly pain any more."

Jane snatched her hand from that of Ellen, and, throwing the sheet over her face, sobbed aloud, while Ellen literally obeyed the Scripture injunction: "Weep with those who weep."

She was the first to recover herself, and strove, with words of gentlest sympathy, to soothe her afflicted companion.

"O, Ellen," cried the inconsolable Jane, "to think of that last meeting, and that the last words—the very last I ever spoke to her were such unkind ones; and it is too late to rectify it now: they must always be the last, and never less unkind than when I spoke them. I must always have it to reflect upon that I did what I could to embitter her life, nothing to make it pleasanter. O, if I could but see her, for one little minute, and tell

her how sorry I am for the past that will never come back.—Many is the time, I have accused her of being an unkind sister to me; now I feel how little cause I ever gave her for liking me. You see that little rose-bush that you have tended so carefully for me has blossomed this morning. Cut off the two clusters of flowers, please, and carry them back with you; put them in Elvira's hand with a sister's love. If I had only thought to send them yesterday! then I might have sent a message to her, now I can never again. You see I do not ask you to stay here, for I know that *her* baby needs you more than I, and I will show the little one the kindness I never gave its mother."

With the pale roses wrapped in several folds of paper, to protect them from the chill air, Ellen made her way to the chamber of the bereaved father.

Aunt Huldah, although deeply grieved at the loss of her favorite niece, scolded volubly, in the midst of her tears, at not having been sent for in the young mother's hour of trial, although it is doubtful if the most urgent summons could have induced her to forsake her brother's bedside.

That brother was made to comprehend the fact of his daughter's sudden death. However great the emotion he may have felt on receipt of this distressing intelligence, he was physically incapable of expressing but little, as power of articulation was still denied him.

Motioning for a pencil, with the only hand which obeyed his control, he with difficulty managed to scrawl:

"Funeral expenses—all—send me."

"He means," said Aunt Huldah, when she had succeeded in deciphering the written words, "that he is willing to defray all funeral expenses. Let the coffin be handsome, and the robe of white cashmere. I wish I could go and see to it myself, but now that it is too late to do the poor child any good, I must stay where duty calls."

I fear Ellen was not sorry that duty called Aunt Huldah in a direction different from her own; but the timely gift from Mr. More she accepted as a personal boon to herself, and expressed

or gratitude with warmth and sincerity. Feeling that she had already detained the doctor's gig too long, Ellen hastened her departure, and once more took her way to Laramont's.

CHAPTER XXVI.

KILLING WITH KINDNESS.—TAKING ONE'S OWN.

Ellen was hardly out of the street when Dr. Johnde himself stepped into the house she had so lately left for his daily call.

He bore about him an air of unusual preoccupation, as softly whistling a nondescript tune of his own, he slowly ascended the stairs leading to his patient's apartment.

The fact was, that, in the course of half an hour, Dr. Johnde was to be the principal performer in one of those critical surgical operations which might restore health to an otherwise doomed man, and might, as the doctor well knew, none better than he, send the sufferer with speed to his last account. In his own mind, the wise physician was balancing the minutest chances of life and death for his patient.

"How are you this morning, Miss More? What! crying? that will never do. We must all learn to bear up under the evils which are inevitable. But I know this sort of trial is not to be soothed by mere words; from yourself must come the strength to endure it. How is this? your pulse is very faint and low; what have you eaten this morning?"

"A spoonful of gruel; nothing more."

"Ah, that is it; you are suffering from want of food. I will order up that hob-nailed damsel, from below stairs, with something for your relief. I am in haste now, but will look in again in the course of an hour, if I find time."

Margery was directed to prepare some species of light food for the invalid, and the doctor left.

It might have been two hours later, when returning by that

way, he determined to repeat his call. Admitting himself, at once, without having recourse to the bell-pull, he surprised Margery, just commencing the ascent of the stairs, bearing in one hand a plate holding a sizable slice of corned beef, flanked by a goodly variety of vegetables, while the other held a saucer well heaped with boiled cabbage.

Dr. Johnde stopped short, thoroughly aghast at the sight before him.

"Bless my soul! girl! what *are* you going to do with all this? just tell me that, will you?"

Poor Margery was signally abashed at first, but plucked up courage anon.

"Ye see, docther, I give her some o' the slops ye're jist stharving her wid, and she said it wasn't afther sthoppin the faintness at all, at all. An' bless yer sowl, why should it, when a year-old babby wouldn't be afther kaping the brith in its body with sick wakening wish-wash? let alone a growed-up woman. An' thinks I to myself, is it Margery O'Dondigel will sthand by, and see a poor crayther a dhropping into her grave jist, an' all for the sake of a good bite of sunthing to give her sthringth and set her up agin?"

The doctor was in the best of humors: he had succeeded, to a marvel, in his surgical experiment, and, under Providence, had given a fellow mortal a fresh lease of life.

"Look here, my good girl," he said, smiling, "did you ever hear of a person being killed by kindness? Well, that is the sort of murder you would have committed, if you had succeeded in carrying out your present intentions."

Margery looked rather horrified, but still incredulous.

"Perhaps I can make you understand," said the doctor, condescending to explain to his puzzled auditor. "If your kitchen fire, for instance, should get so low that there were only a few coals left alive in the centre, would you pour on a fresh lot of coal, or would you coax it into flame with a handful of shavings and a few bits of light wood, in the first place?"

"O, if the fire was nigh about out, I'd be wanting a small thrifle o' kindlings to start it wid, surely."

Exactly: well, your trying to smother the little bit of life
; is left to your young mistress, with this hearty food, would
ike pouring a hod-full of hard coal into your stove when the
is almost out. Now scamper off and toast half a slice of
d, cut very thin, remember, and bring it up stairs with a cup
'eak tea."
orely abased in spirit, Margery departed to fulfil these com-
ds.

s Ellen neared Laramont's, the figure of a woman with bare
l and in mourning robes was the first to present itself. She
standing on the outer steps, peering up and down the street,
f in anxious search of some object which did not seem to be
hcoming.
'Why, Mrs. Ames! you here?" cried Ellen, on drawing suf-
ntly near to recognize the woman on the steps. "You know
I was not to leave the room while I was away."
"I know; but when a chamber-maid told me that some one
hed to see me on a matter of life and death in my own family,
orgot everything but Bessie; dear child, she's all that is left
me now. It is very strange that I find no one here."
The speaker was greatly agitated.
"There must be some mistake," said Ellen, reassuringly;
erhaps you received a message intended for another. Evi-
ntly there is no one here wishing to see you, for the street
ms quite deserted. Let us go in."
On reaching the parlor-door, they looked at each other in sur-
se, not unmingled with consternation, on finding it bolted
inst them. Listening, they became aware that there was an
sual stir and bustle in the room inside. A cold sweat broke
on Ellen's face, and her breath came quick and gaspingly.
uld it be that Mr. Leroy's disease had suddenly taken the
m of insanity? and that, in frantic glee, he was tearing the
niture about the apartment?
Just then came a heavy trundling sound, like that caused by
ling a sofa, or other heavy article, across a floor.
Mrs. Ames, perceiving that Ellen was ready to sink, passed

her arm around her waist, thus steadying her trembling form. Hark! the sound of a man's voice speaking inside! Ellen stooped so as to bring her ear nearer the key-hole, and distinctly heard the words: "Loss upon loss! I must begin to stop the outgo somewhere, if I wouldn't leave my children beggars. Mr. Leroy will be as well off without all this bravery, if his friend and bondsman *did* mean to save it for him: I never had anything better than cane-seated chairs, and straw matting, in my poor house."

Then came a sound as of pulling up the tacks of a carpet by main force.

"Take care there," cried the same voice Ellen had hitherto heard, "that's a real nail in the corner; don't tear the carpet getting it up."

Ellen no longer hesitated to speak her fears.

"O, Mrs. Ames! that message must have been a trick to get you out of the room; and now they are taking the furniture we were left to guard."

"How can that be, when no one has come into the house while I was below? Ah! now I remember catching a glimpse of two or three men somewhere as I was running down stairs: must have been they. I never dreamed of being circumvented in this way."

But few minutes elapsed in silence before the door was thrown open, and a flabby-faced; unwholesome-looking man, whose wheezing breath betrayed the severe form of asthma under which he was laboring, issued from the room. Ellen at once pressed forward to effect an entrance.

"Not so fast, Miss," interposed the stranger, checking her progress with his outstretched arm; "it is necessary that the room be cleared before you can go into it."

Forthwith the two men who had made the trouble about the furniture in the morning emerged from the room, trundling a velvet lounge before them.

Sooth to say, the officer seemed by no means proud of his present employment.

"Sorry to see things taking a bad turn with you, Miss Vern

he said, without looking at her; "but I am only acting under orders, which I had no hand in bringing about. It was not I who told him" (with a backward jerk of the thumb toward the unwholesome-looking individual before mentioned) "how matters were arranged here, and how he could take advantage of the arrangement."

"He is my cousin," said the officer's more sinister looking companion, nodding toward the man who kept strict watch and ward over Ellen and Mrs. Ames; "and he has a helpless wife and an ailing child that I shouldn't like to have left dependent on me; for I'm a poor man myself, with a plenty of small mouths of my own to feed. So I says to Jo, says I to him, 'take your own, my man, wherever you can find it, specially if the law will bear you out in the act; which I hain't no doubt, in this case, it will; for, you see, you ain't nigh so strong as you was, Jo, and hadn't ought to run the resk of leaving your folks to be a burden upon some other folks that can't hardly keep their heads above water, as it is.' I suppose this Mr. What-ye-may-call-him can make out to live for awhile, without satin chairs and lace curtains to his parlor. I never had none o' these fixings to my old shell of a house, and I've managed to keep tolruble comfortable without 'em, in my small way."

He chuckled malignantly; and Ellen turned away from him, utterly sick at heart.

Not until the last article they desired to take had been removed, were the two women suffered to enter the dismantled apartment. Dismal and gloomy enough it seemed, with its bare, unpainted floor and curtainless windows, with the unsightly iron spikes which had formerly supported the cornices protruding from the upper portion of the casements. Scarcely stopping to note that it was only the more costly articles of furniture, on whose possession Elvira had specially prided herself, which had been removed, while the old couch and easy-chair, generally appropriated by Mr. Leroy, retained their accustomed places, Ellen hastened to the inner chamber. There, with his head across his arms, which rested on the bed, almost in contact with the inanimate form of his wife, Mr. Leroy was soundly sleeping. In this

fact Ellen found abundant cause for thankfulness; and resolved that, if it were possible, the whole proceedings of the morning should be kept secret from him, until he was in a more fit state to be informed of them.

Mr. Trueburn had promised to see her as soon as she returned from Mr. More's, and already she heard the sound of his voice in the next room.

"Pray tell me, Miss Verne, what is the meaning of all this?" he asked, looking about him with lowering brows, as she met him in the parlor.

In as few words as possible, Ellen explained to him what had occurred.

"A contemptible unheard-of trick!" he exclaimed indignantly as she concluded her brief recital; "I thought I had been dealing with a gentleman." A moment's pause, and then he continued more thoughtfully, "Well, as possession is nine points in the law, I suppose there would be little use in trying to remedy what is past; but as Mr. Leroy seems, for the present, in no condition to advise as to your future course, I will gladly do all in my power to supply his place as adviser, unless you have other friends, whose services you would prefer to accept."

This timely offer was accepted as frankly as it had been made.

"Do you not think," he asked, "that Mr. Leroy would be benefitted by a change to some more quiet location than a public boarding-house like this is ever likely to become?"

To this suggestion Ellen gave her eager assent, expressing a strong desire to return to the lodgings they had formerly occupied at Miss Ruggles'. Mr. Trueburn promised to ascertain, in the course of the day, if they were vacant; and then proceeded to talk over arrangements for the funeral, which, under the circumstances, he thought ought not to be long deferred.

Two days later, a single carriage, preceded by a hearse, drove slowly away from Laramont's. No one but Aunt Huldah, Mr. Leroy, Mr. Trueburn and Ellen, followed Elvira's remains to their last resting-place.

Aunt Huldah was clad in darkest habiliments of woe; but, beyond sewing a crape band on Mr. Leroy's hat, Ellen had made

no attempt at putting on mourning apparel. This last token of respect for the dead she would gladly have given, had she not felt that her first duty was to the living.

Mr. Leroy leaned heavily back in the corner of the carriage where he had been placed by Mr. Trueburn, neither speaking or moving, his whole look and attitude giving token of the intense weariness by which he was oppressed.

A long line of carriages prevented the scant funeral cortege from drawing up to the church, beneath which was the family tomb of the Mores.

There was a rush of boys down the steps, and then a bridal procession came gaily forth. No; Ellen's eyes did not deceive her, it was the beautiful Laura Avondale—the new-made Mrs. Eglistoun, who leaned so confidingly on her husband's arm. She raised her large liquid eyes timidly to his face, and their expression of womanly tenderness and devotion showed that however much her ambition might have been gratified at the brilliant alliance she had formed, her heart had also lent its sanction to her choice.

Right loftily the bridegroom bore himself; but it was only pride that brightened his glance as it fell on the lovely face upraised to his own.

The bride caught sight of the waiting hearse, and a strange tremor shook her frame.

"You are cold; the air is chill," said the impassive groom, as he leaned forward, and, taking a cloak of royal purple velvet lined with white satin from an attendant footman, somewhat ostentatiously drew it about the fair white shoulders of his shivering bride.

Assisting her into the carriage and following her himself, the bridal retinue speedily moved on, making way for the mourning party to approach the sidewalk.

Down a flight of dark stone steps they follow the coffin bearers with their mournful burden, along a damp passage whose air is heavy with odors of mortal decay, to the door of the narrow vault, where, in company with kindred dust, all that is left of Elvira may moulder back to earth again.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LITERATURE AS A CRUTCH INSTEAD OF A STAFF.

ONCE more, though in appearance but the wreck of his former self, is Mr. Leroy domiciled in the old wooden house he so reluctantly left.

This had only been brought about by considerable effort on the part of Mr. Trueburn, who had to overcome Mr. Walgreen's unwillingness to resign all claims to the room so recently sanctified by the death of a dear friend, and Miss Ruggles' determination to lease the whole floor to a single responsible tenant. This last difficulty was obviated by Mr. Trueburn procuring single lodgers for the two front chambers, and giving his written word that their rent should be punctually paid, thus leaving to Mr. Leroy the same rooms he had occupied when Ellen was first introduced to the house.

Mr. Trueburn had lent Mr. Chapley both advice and assistance in winding up the affairs of the short-lived firm; and, although Ellen did not exactly understand how matters had been finally adjusted with the creditors, she clearly comprehended the fact that nothing had been saved for Mr. Leroy from the wreck of his business capital. To Mr. Trueburn they were indebted for their present supply of coal and wood, together with the small quantity of provisions and cooking utensils absolutely essential for the commencement of housekeeping. This indebtedness, Ellen strove, with ceaseless effort, to repay with the products of her pen.

Weighed down by care, anxiety, and never-ending toil, she yet wrote with a power and pathos she had never exhibited in the compositions of her happier days. Is not sorrow, stern and crushing, often found to be the most effectual agent for freeing from gross earthly alloy, the soul's best and purest essence? Full many a pen of rarest metal has rusted inert until cleansed in the fountain of bitter experience.

Mr. Trueburn called every week for the "articles" he was sure

to find ready for him, but he seldom entered the room. With occupation for every hour, and every instant, of the day, Ellen has not a moment to spare for social converse. She has grown miserly of that time and strength which are food and shelter for the dear ones under her charge. Mr. Trueburn would gladly have lightened her burden, if he could have seen any way of doing so, without wounding that delicacy which forbade her to complain or open her lips with regard to her own labors and privations, excepting by taking her writings promptly and paying for them double the amount she would have received elsewhere.

Mr. Leroy, all this time, lying on the bed or lying on the couch, seemed to have but a vague and indistinct comprehension of what was occurring about him. Sometimes he evidently made an effort to comprehend the new position in which he found himself, but the attempt generally ended in his pressing his hand to his temples with a groan of baffled inquiry.

It was only when urged upon his acceptance, that he could be persuaded to partake of a small quantity of the lightest and plainest food. Every day, and all day long, he would still lie on the old couch, asking nothing, evidently desiring nothing but rest—only rest. He slept much, and that profoundly; never, when most awake, rising above a semi-conscious state.

But a darker day than this, this little household had yet seen drew on apace.

Mrs. Ames, for a month after Elvira's death, took the whole charge of her babe; but at the expiration of that period of time, her own health began rapidly to decline; and soon her cough became so racking and continuous, that it prevented the infant's sleeping, and reluctantly she was obliged to resign her office of nurse, and leave the house to seek medical attendance for herself.

Thus the whole care of a puny and ailing babe devolved upon Ellen. Many a time and oft was she called up, in the course of each night, to minister to its wants; and dared not permit herself the luxury of soundly sleeping lest she should fail to awaken at its feeble cries. Her hours of rest thus broken in upon, she was less than ever fitted for the performance of the multifarious duties of the day. Yet, when the child slept, she resolutely

plied her busy pen, although much better disposed to yield to the claims of sleep herself. Each succeeding day, she felt more and more sensibly that weary lassitude which, sooner or later, is sure to result from over-taxed powers. Frequent headaches beset her, her eyes grew dim and sunken, her face lost its fulness of outline; but yet she bore bravely up beneath the fearful consciousness that nought but her own feeble arm kept grim want at bay.

There came a week during which Mr. Trueburn, for the first time, failed to call for her writings; and her heart sank with dreariest forebodings, as she remembered how utterly dependent they all were on one almost a stranger. Several days crept dismally by, and yet he did not come. Something must be done, for she had no longer the means to pay for the baker's daily loaf, and the pint of milk which the babe could scarcely lack. Ellen could have almost envied Mr. Leroy his utter indifference to the vulgar animal gratification of eating and drinking, while dining herself off a boiled turnip, wherewith she was *not* content. That uncomfortable craving sensation of being "filled but not fed," which Hillard describes as being the result of the vegetable diet the Italians affect, would make itself felt.

Seizing a moment when Mr. Leroy and the babe were both soundly sleeping, she took her way, with rapid steps, to Mr. Trueburn's publishing office. There she found several gentlemen seated at desks ranged about the sides of the apartment. No one, after the first glance of inquiry, took any notice of her. She inquired for Mr. Trueburn.

"That is his clerk," replied the person addressed, pointing to a young man at the other end of the room.

To this latter personage Ellen presented herself, asking if Mr. Trueburn was to be seen.

"I should rather think not," was the rejoinder, in a tone of civil indifference; "I believe his doctors don't let any of his friends see him, just at present."

"Why, is he ill?"

"Yes; took a bad cold—settled into typhus—out of his head most of the time."

Ellen's heart beat thick and fast at this unexpected piece of information. For a few moments, she was quite unable to articulate a single word, and her voice was full of an unwonted tremor as she said:

"I am a contributor to the Cauterizer; can you receive, and pay for, my articles in his absence?"

"I am not empowered to accept communications of any kind: he always attends to those matters himself; that is an editor's duty, you know. I hope he may soon be back to attend to it again; the doctor has pronounced him out of danger."

He bowed and turned to the letter whose perusal she had interrupted. She looked at the seal-ring on his finger, the gold watch-guard sparkling on his satin vest. Assuredly he could lend her a trifle, to relieve her more pressing necessities without feeling its loss.

Impossible!—Her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth when she would have begged the favor of him. With heavy, doubtful steps she slowly left the office.

What a world of sorrow and suffering it seemed to her. How could so many of pleasure's ardent votaries surrender to unthinking gaiety those minutes, every one of which rose burthened with the wail of human sorrow?

Not of others, but of herself, she must think. What was next to be done? Go to the office of another weekly paper, and try her success there? This was what she did.

The editor she sought was found busy in his sanctum; and he leisurely finished the perusal of the written communication he held in his hand, before according Ellen a hearing.

"Ah! more manuscript?" (carelessly thrusting the roll she offered inside his desk) "Well, I will find time to look it over in the course of a week, if it is a possible thing. If you will call at the end of that time, I will let you know if it is acceptable."

"But I am in haste," Ellen timidly asserted; "the articles are all short, if you could find time sooner"——

She broke short off, chilled by the cold business air of the man with whom she had to deal.

"We will see what we can do for you, ma'am; come in four

days from now, if that suits you better. These young writers are in such mighty haste to rush into print, that it is hard work, with our long list of contributors, to satisfy all of them."

* * * * * * *

How Ellen passed the four succeeding days, she could hardly have told herself. They were days of miserable want, of heart-sickness and hope deferred.

Trembling with weakness and agitation, she once more, with feeble, wavering steps, entered the office where her manuscript had been left.

"Do you propose becoming a regular contributor to our columns?" was the editor's first question.

Ellen thought not.

What price did she expect to get for her writings?

Whatever they were worth to him, nothing more.

"O, we pay all prices, from fifty cents a column upwards, depending upon the intrinsic value of the articles presented, and the literary reputation of their writers. Just at present we are, however, overrun with all sorts of communications, as I think I mentioned to you before. How many articles do you think we have in this very desk, awaiting our earliest leisure for critical perusal?

Ellen had not the heart to venture an estimate as to their supposed number.

"Six hundred, at the very least," he pompously announced. "This very letter I hold in my hand is from a young lady contributor who is thoroughly indignant that we do not make use of her *articles* more rapidly. But we can't fill our paper with one person's writings; the public must, and will, have variety. Let me see; we have over fifty pieces, prose and poetry, from this same contributor. I wish she would remember that our sheet is not of mammoth size, and not give us too much of a good thing."

"But my own compositions!" suggested Ellen, who had grown more and more depressed at every word he uttered.

"Here they are, and very well written, too; but, until we have reduced the quantity we have on hand, we shall hardly *pay*

ing new; that is to say, unless it happens to be either
able production in itself, or the work of some distin-
author. However, if any inexperienced writer wielding
le pen, should feel sufficiently rewarded for his fugitive
the pleasure of seeing himself in print, I will try to find
or him in my overcrowded columns."

in need, and my time is not my own," said Ellen, with
lips, as she turned hopelessly away, and, with her eyes
inding tears, groped her way down the narrow staircase,
roll of manuscript tightly clenched in one nervous hand.
ly, and oh, most drearily, she dragged her footsteps
the home where care and want awaited her coming.
ets through which her way led her were thronged with
ssed promenaders. Rich robes of velvet and satin
past her, and the flash of costly gems fell on her dim
ot less cold than the diamond's blaze were the careless
bestowed on her by their fair wearers. Her heart
n her bosom. Cruel and pitiless seemed the brilliant
t looked on her misery so coldly.

ciful Heaven! what have I done that all these should
alled so bravely while I hunger for bread?"

notion of bitter resentment was steeling her heart against
. She checked the unworthy impulse.

wrong had these unconscious pedestrians done her?
; not even in thought; for how should they know the
ngs she was enduring?

again will she be unable to comprehend the instinctive,
ing spirit of hatred not seldom cherished by the ill-fed,
oor toward the lordly, ostentatious rich, in their mag-
of display.

the influence of a sudden impulse, Ellen turned her
ward the dwelling of Mr. More. He surely would not
own grandchild suffering from the want it was in his
relieve.

he first time it struck her as singular that none of the
ad called on her, or so much as sent a message of inquiry
l week.

A woman to whom Ellen was an utter stranger answered her summons at the door. She asked for Mr. More.

"He does not live here now," the stranger replied.

"Not live here now!" Ellen actually reeled with the sudden conviction that her last plank of support was sinking beneath her.

"You look tired and pale," said the woman kindly; "hadn't you better step in and take a seat, while I tell you anything you may wish to know about the family?"

Ellen accepted this invitation mechanically, being really so much stunned as not to know rightly what she was about.

"I know all about the Mores," resumed the last speaker; "for I took care of Jane the last two days she was here, after the relapse she got through her fright and all that."

"To what fright do you refer?"

"I will tell you all about how it happened: Mr. More regained the use of his limbs, and the faculty of speech, but the doctor didn't seem to be satisfied with his improvement, and gave orders that he should be strictly watched, and every change of symptom accurately reported to him. This being constantly watched Mr. More seemed to greatly dislike, and took a sudden aversion to his half-sister—the lady who nursed him."

"I know," said Ellen, "for I took care of Jane, until called away by the sudden death of her sister."

"Ah! Miss Verne! she spoke of you often, and was greatly troubled at being obliged to leave without seeing you. But as I was saying of Mr. More, he could not bear to have Aunt Huldah near him. The reason for this came out at last. One day, toward night, she was trying to strike a match, on the bottom of a box, quite near his bed, when out he sprang and clutched her by the throat, whispering hoarsely, close into her ear, 'Just as I thought! and now that I have caught you in the very act—she was holding the lighted match in her hand, remember—'we shall see who will come off second best in this infernal game of yours. So, you was really fool enough to think that I would lie still in bed there, and let you burn me to a cinder with this blazing hair of yours.'

She had bright red hair, you know, and this was the horrid :eit of a crazy man; for, by some unaccountable change, his ase had suddenly put on the form of raving madness. Seiz- the match from her hand, he stamped it under his feet, and, clutching her by the throat with one hand, with the other ore her hair from her head in handfuls, also stamping it un- his feet. Once she wrenched herself free from his grasp, and against a corner of the table with such force as to cut a re gash in the temple; but he seized her again, before she ld get out of the room. Aunt Huldah has a voice of her own, screamed 'murder' with a will. Jane heard the terrible ams, and made out to creep to the door; but instead of be- of any assistance to her aunt, she fainted away with fright. nt Huldah finally succeeded in getting to the window, and hing her arm through a pane of glass, made herself heard n the street below. Two men dashed up stairs to the rescue, l secured the madman, as he proved to be. Insane as he was, ou't think Aunt Huldah will ever forgive that terrible assault her person.

'Dr. Johnde was sent for with all haste; and had the maniac efully guarded until next morning, when he was sent over to insane asylum at Somerville. Jane was so much worse from effect of her fright, and the cold she took lying on the land- , that the doctor insisted on her taking up with a free bed ich was at his disposal at the hospital, where she would be perly cared for, and not keep getting those pull-backs which re ruining her constitution. They carried her off on a mat- s in a close carriage, two days ago."

"And Aunt Huldah, was she badly injured?" asked Ellen, h languid interest, for so steeped was she in an all-pervading se of her own misery, that the recital of others' woes had ed to call up that vivid sympathy which, at another time, she uld so freely have bestowed.

"Well, considerably so; but I think she was more frightened n hurt. Positively, I never saw a woman so terrified in all 'life; she kept a sharp eye on everybody who came near her, though she more than half expected to be seized unawares by

some of them. I don't think she really breathed freely un was fairly out of the house, although she excused her goin so abruptly as she did, and leaving her niece in the ca stranger—that is, of myself—by saying that, under the stances, she considered it her duty to hurry back to some tion or other, with whom she was staying before she can as there were four boys in the family, who were on the hi to ruin, through the weak and silly indulgence of a mother."

"How long is Jane to remain at the hospital?"

"That depends entirely upon her health; she has m rangements to come back and board with us as soon a able; with nobody but my husband and myself in our fa can easily spare Miss More all the room she will want. lieve, by the way, that I have not yet mentioned to y we have rented the house and store; and that the princi of the proceeds will go towards the support of Mr. More asylum. Have I forgotten anything about which you wo to be informed?"

Ellen thought of nothing; and, having thanked her quaintance for the information so freely given, with that air of courtesy which, under the most trying circumstanc deserted her, she rose to go. More than ever dishearte once more wended her steps homeward.

The feeble wail of the little Jenny smote on her ear a cended the stairs. Mr. Leroy still slept, calmly and we there was on his pale sunken features a serenity of ex which Ellen had not hitherto noticed there.

Taking the puny babe in her arms, Ellen fed her fron of arrow-root,—the very last drop of food in the house,— ing it, the while, with hungry eyes herself. Let no one not himself suffered the pangs of hunger pronounce this a act of self-sacrifice.

Little Jenny quieted, Ellen looked about the room to could best be spared for bread. Why had she not thought of this method of obtaining temporary relief? because, for the last few days, her perceptions as to w

means in domestic economy had been less than ordinarily clear and acute. Sleeplessness and want, together with an ever present sense of dread for the future, weighing on her spirits, had nearly incapacitated her for marking out the best line of action to be pursued under the circumstances. Her extreme anxiety to do the very best that in her power lay, for the helpless objects of her charge, had almost defeated itself, by further sapping the foundations of her strength, and thus aiding to make her as helpless as themselves. But, as I was saying, she now looked about her to see what could most easily be spared. Surely there was nothing among the scanty articles of household furniture that met her view, which they could well do without. There was the small amount of jewelry left by Elvira, which had, thus far, been religiously preserved for her child—only at the last extremity, must that be given up. Mr. Leroy's outer coat hung idly in the closet, but the disposing of it seemed to imply the tacit admission of a fear that he might never need it more—an admission from which Ellen almost superstitiously shrank. Her own scanty wardrobe presented not a single ornament or superfluous article of clothing of which to dispose. Not much time for incertitude could she allow herself. It was a cashmere shawl which had formerly been Elvira's, that lay across her arm, as she commenced descending the stairs, on her way to the old-clothes shop at a corner of the street. But she had over-estimated her own powers of endurance. A sudden giddiness came over her, a sudden darkness round about her, and clutching wildly, yet vainly, at the bannisters, she plunged headlong down the remaining portion of the staircase.

How long she lay senseless in the hall Ellen never knew; but when she regained consciousness, she found herself lying on her own bed in the kitchen, with the honest face of Margery O'Dondigel bending over her. What an amount of new strength and courage Ellen gained from her first glance of the coarse, rough lines of this face, so full of a kindliness and sympathy, all its own!

"An' be the powers of male-gruel, it warms the heart o' me to see *yer swate* eyes open to the blissid light, onest more," was

the more hearty than elegant expression of Margery, as Ellen languidly looked about her. But what cared she for elegant phrases now? More welcome, far, this homely face, beaming with untaught sympathy—these strong arms so ready to lend her aid—than the most polished utterances of condolence, from hearts grown icy-cold in the observance of frigid conventionalisms.

It was several minutes before Ellen could so far shake off the depressing nausea which now obstinately beset her, as to be able to unfold the missive, addressed to herself, of which Margery was the bearer. As she did so, a five dollar bank-note fluttered forth and was eagerly caught in her tremulous fingers, while her eyes overflowed with tears, as her heart with deep thankfulness. A minute given to the indulgence of this new emotion, and Ellen read aloud as follows:

"A present to Elvira's little one, with much love from its Aunt Jane."

"She couldn't write another word on account o' the wakeness," explained Margery; "an' it's two days ago, at the very laste, ye ought to have got that bit o' writing; an' so ye should, honey, jist that same, on'y when I come here, the very avening the young misthriss was sint to the hospittle, it wasn't let in I was, though it was pounded raw me knuckles was, a thryin' to make somebody come to the back gate; an' whin I tuck to the front door-bell, 'twas jist as bad off I was; for, though I got a hould o' the ould handle, and pulled for dare life, nobody took no notice on't, an' I had to go away; that's the truth o' the story."

Ellen explained that the bell-wire was so much out of order, as to render it quite useless until repaired.

"Faix, an' I belave ye," rejoined Margery; "for I tugged away at it enough to wake the siven slapers, if there had been any vartue in the ould jingler. Thin I wint away to Barney's, Mr. Fardigan's, my own sisther's husband that is; an' his month old babby tuck sack, an' died, the night; an' twasn't in throuble I could be afther laving them; an' thin comes the wake, an' whin that was through wid, I jist come to thry me luck agin wid the botherin' ould door. An' it's not lit in I'd ha' been, to-day, on'y I made bould to owpen the door an' walk ethraight in; an'

was yer own blissed self I finds lying on the floor, without ıse or motion, an' it's dead I thought ye was, when ye niver so uch as owpened yer lips to spake a word all the time that ıare little ould maid—och an' bedad, there she comes this lissid minute."

It was Miss Ruggles who hesitatingly put her head in at the oor, poised on one foot as if half inclined for a rapid retreat, on ssuring herself that her lodger had regained consciousness.

"How did it happen?" was her not very lucid enquiry.

Ellen understood her meaning, however, and replied that she ıad fainted and fallen while descending the stairs.

"Much hurt?"

"Not much, thank you; only a cut on the lip, and a few ɔruises about the chest and shoulders."

A moment's fidgety irresolution, and the fair querist vanished ıs suddenly as she had appeared.

"Now, Margery," said Ellen, without evincing the least surrise at her landlady's abrupt movements, "I am going to tax our kindness to do me a favor, and I do believe Providence ɜnt you to me at the very moment when I needed you most; ɜuly there is nobody in the world I should have been more glad ı see."

Margery's homely red face brightened all over at this assuıce, and she eagerly expressed her willingness to undertake any rvice Ellen might require of her.

"Well, then, take this money and run out for a loaf of bread ıd a pint of milk; you know where to go for them."

In going to the closet, as directed by Ellen, for a pitcher in hich to bring back the milk, it struck Margery that the shelves ereof were remarkably bare of anything in the shape of food; ıd a new light dawned on her not over brilliant percepɔns.

"Is the masther sack?" she asked, coming back to Ellen' ıdside.

"Not exactly ill, Margery; but so miserably weak that he is ɔliged to lie on the couch, the most of the time."

Margery said nothing, but, turning away, raised the skirt of

her coarse merino dress, and wiped her eyes on its wrong side.

Ellen was touched, even to tears, at this spontaneous expression of genuine sympathy.

Every step of the way, did Margery run, in quest of the articles for which she had been despatched, with swift feet bearing them back to the half-famished Ellen, who partook of her slice of dry bread and glass of cold water with an exquisite keenness of relish which the daintiest viands at Laramont's generous board had, many a time, failed to inspire.

The triumphant flush on Margery's apple-dumpling face was explained when that broad-fisted damsel extended to Ellen the bank-note entrusted to her charge, from which not a cent had been subtracted.

"Couldn't you get it changed?" asked Ellen, slightly coloring.

"It wasn't afther thrying, I was."

"But, Margery, I can't allow you to spend your hard-earned wages for me; I can't, indeed," remonstrated Ellen, a bunch gathering in her throat.

"An' it's meself is proud an' glad to do that same. Wasn't it a saft word an' a honey-swate look ye always brought along wid ye into the kitchen at Mr. More's, forbye, let alone the ilegant letther ye wrote home to ould Ireland, an' the dhiractions ye give me aboot that murdherin ould black stove, bad cess til it? Though it's little showing an' O'Dondigel would nade to take the managemint of the very best kitchen in Ameriky; it's only the ways of this counthry people, they'd nade to be pit up til."

Of course Ellen was not in the least disposed to detract from the merits of the O'Dondigel family in general, or any member of it in particular; and, without further demur, gratefully accepted Margery's bounty, even when it displayed itself in the form of a well laden basket of provisions, in which herrings and potatoes predominated, the whole being crowned by an enormous cabbage.

Every day during the week in which Margery was out of a

ce, she spent several hours of each with Ellen, rendering ny services which were of inestimable benefit to the latter, the least of which was carrying little Jenny out into the ar, bracing air of the streets, greatly to the improvement of t puny young maiden's health.

Before the week had elapsed, however, Mr. Trueburn had ven to the door, in a close carriage; and, although too feeble alight and ascend the stairs, he had found strength sufficient purchase Ellen's manuscript articles, and thus encourage her resume the use of her pen. So, the family were restored to nparative comfort; and want no longer stood on their thresld.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AUNT AND NIECE.—A CASUAL ACQUAINTANCE.

One bright afternoon, Ellen was sitting with the babe lying leep across her lap, while she bent, in an extremely uncomfortle and cramped position, over the little table, at her right nd. So absorbed was she in her occupation, that the door ened unperceived, and without her being aware of the fact, ne More stood intently regarding her. Her eyes were hollow; r cheeks sunken; and Jane saw that, although her hand flew h vigor back and forth across the sheet she was rapidly filling, wrote with effort; and that, from the inner corner of either , deep lines ran obliquely up into her forehead.

"Are you too busy to speak to me, Ellen?"

Thus addressed, she paused, and looked up with a start.

"Not I, indeed," she replied, clearing her brow with an effort; ut I really did not see you until you spoke. I am more glad n I can tell you to see you able to be out. Are you quite ll and strong again?"

"I believe they pronounced me 'cured' when they sent me ay from the hospital this morning; but I can't boast of much

strength to spare yet. But why do you try to tend the baby and write at the same time?"

Ellen glanced toward Mr. Leroy, who was lying upon the couch with a handkerchief thrown across his eyes, to guard them from the light, and satisfied herself that he was sleeping, before replying:—

"I must do it, Jane. If my arm should fail, what would become of us? My pen is our sole means of support; baby is so worrisome I cannot write when she is awake; and she sleeps so lightly, I cannot lie her on the bed without awaking her. That is why I write with her in my lap."

"Too bad! but now I am so near, I can be of help to you.—There, she is waking now; may I take her?"

Ellen replied by placing the babe in her arms.

"Dear me, what a mite of a creature it is. What do you call her?"

"We call her Jenny; but she was named Jane, after her aunt."

"How kind of you! But what a serious look it has for a baby; and small wonder, for what a helpless, forlorn little creature it must have been, but for your care. I am sure its father ought to be grateful to you, all his life long; and I too, for that matter. See, she is not afraid of her new aunt! Perhaps she will get accustomed to me if I make a great deal of her, now she is so very little, and even learn to love her hideous fright of an aunt in time; who knows?"

She spoke lightly, smilingly, but there were tears in her eyes which she strove to hide by bending more closely over her infant charge, fondling it in her arms, and caressing its scant brown locks, murmuring all the while terms of childish endearment—sufficiently unwonted sounds from her lips.

Ellen watched them with a swelling heart. "May they do each other much good—this long-tried, heart-sore woman, and tender fragile babe so dependent on the love its very helplessness fails not to inspire"—she inly prayed.

While thus watching them, it gradually dawned upon her perceptions that Jane was greatly improved in personal appearance

since the old times when she had occasionally met her, before her illness. Her abundant and really beautiful hair was no longer all drawn to the back of her head, turned up in a nondescript twist, and fastened by a broken bit of comb, stuck awrily in; but, in full wavy bandeaux, fell over her cheek, partially concealing the unsightly scars which she had formerly seemed to take a sort of perverse pleasure in displaying to their full extent. Her figure, too, no longer marred in effect by the loose, ill-fitting wrappers in which she had once chosen to disguise herself, now displayed the exquisite symmetry of its well-rounded proportions. Ellen gladly hailed this improvement, as a token that Jane had resolved thenceforward to make the best of things as they were, and no longer indulge in worse than useless repinings, at her appointed lot in life.

"How puny she is," said Jane, still intent on the babe; "don't you think it would do her good to be carried out, just a little way, for a breath of air?"

"I have no doubt of it; but I make a point of never leaving Mr. Leroy alone, excepting when it is absolutely necessary."

"Then wrap her up warmly, and give her to me; I am strong enough to carry her the length of the street and back."

Ellen acceded to the request; and afterwards busied herself with her pen, while the two were absent.

"See how much brighter her eyes are, than when we went out," cried Jane on her return, holding up her little namesake in triumph to Ellen's view.

"They are, indeed," said Ellen, smiling, while secretly admitting to herself that the aunt's beaming face was very unlike what it had been in its former dejected aspect.

"But I don't think," Jane went on to say, "that this big shawl is exactly the thing to wrap up a baby in, and I am going to make her a nice wadded cloak, out of my old blue cashmere, and knit her a warm hood. Farther than that, I have been thinking of all that you told me about studying and educating yourself; and if *you* could do it, why not I? Now I will tell you what I want to do. I want you to make out a list of such books as you think I shall need to begin with; and, if I get into

difficulty occasionally in my studies, I shall come to you to help me out. I know you have more than your hands full now; but if you will give me some little assistance as teacher, I will make all little Jenny's clothes for her; and come and take care of her two or three hours every day, so that you can write, for that time, without interruption, quite at your ease."

Ellen gladly acceded to this proposal, and Jane soon after took leave. No sooner was she fairly out of the house, than Mr. Leroy, whom Ellen had supposed to be soundly sleeping, threw off the handkerchief covering his face, and rose from the couch on which he had been lying. Proceeding to an old chest of drawers, he abstracted therefrom a silver watch which had once belonged to his father, and was consequently highly prized by himself. Going next to the closet, he drew on his overcoat, and tied a fur cap about his ears.

"Why, Mr. Leroy, what are you thinking of? You surely are not going to venture out on such a cold day as this. You must not go, indeed you must not."

"This little one has been out; then why not I? Is every one to suffer from want and exposure but myself?" And his white lips were tremulous, his voice unsteady from the depth of his emotion.

"But you are weak yet, Laurence, brother; and you have been shut up so long here, without exercise, that I am afraid to have you venture out, for the first time, on such a chilly day as this."

"A long time shut up, do you say? It has seemed but a few days that I have lain here and seen you writing, always writing for my support—mine and that of my child. What a cruelly hard task you must have had of it! I see it in your face, hear it in your voice."

"Then do not take away my reward from me," she pleaded, "and make all my exertions of no avail, by risking your chance of health through too sudden exposure. Let me go out and get for you what you wish."

"You would still spare me; yourself you never spare. It must be so no longer."

He put her gently aside, and resolutely left the room. Her joy at the evident improvement in his condition, both mental and physical, was alloyed by anxiety as to the result of what she could not but deem his rash experiment. Greatly relieved was she when the object of her solicitude returned, accompanied by a handcart-man, with some carpenter's tools and a small quantity of well-seasoned lumber.

Once more is heard the sound of the plane and the chisel in the whilom atelier, re-transformed to the mechanic's work-room. But Mr. Leroy had over-estimated his but newly regained strength. Heavy drops of perspiration bedewed his face, even while the shivering chills of exhausted vitality were shaking his nerveless frame. He was fain to lean on Ellen's shoulder, as, with slow, faltering steps, he dragged himself back to the couch, a look of grievous disappointment on his wasted features.

"I can bear anything, now I feel that you will so soon be able to take care of us again," she murmured encouragingly in his ear, as she covered him with her own warm shawl; "but you must not spoil all, by being in too great haste to be well."

What a thrill of joy came over her, as she marked the old look of intelligence in the eyes that met her own with an expression of unspeakable gratitude! It was like one dead rising to life—this awakening of spirit and body from their long torpor. In the fullness of her content, Ellen could even felicitate herself that this change for the better had not occurred a week sooner, when his favorable progress toward health must inevitably have been checked by a knowledge of the destitute condition to which they were reduced.

Little by little his strength returned to him, until, as the sunny spring days gradually lengthened, he was once more able to resume his former employment at the trade he had so foolishly abandoned. Very slowly, to be sure, did the look of gloomy vacancy, which had for so long a period usurped his former quiet cheerfulness of expression, lighten from off his face. But it was gone at last; the old vigor nerved his stalwart arm once more, and occasionally he trolled forth half-forgotten verses from some

quaint, old-time ballad which he had learned in "dear England," as he persisted in terming the land which held his boyhood's home. And who amongst us did not, at the period of which I write, say "dear England," when reverting, in thought, to the home of his sires! What if a bigoted, self-willed monarch did misrule his people, and oppress our nation's infancy? For all that, we glory in England's successes with the barely self-conscious, and rarely acknowledged, pride of kindred; and the national heart would sink at thought of any real reverse to our mother-land, from which, as with one voice, we pray "Heaven shield her."

It is a warmer feeling than that of mere pride that glows in our breasts at any chance word of approval from our cousins across the sea; and an emotion bitterer than that of wounded self-love that thrills us at words of derisive import, sometimes, but not always, by us deserved.

There is no love deeper and purer than the love of kindred; no animosity more deadly than the animosity of brothers. Cherishing the former, and most heartily eschewing the latter, we cry "All Hail! fair Land, which gave birth to our sires! Prythee have patience with the faults of our youth; and we will strive to be not over-sensitive to that arrogant spirit of dictation thine old age of wisdom may sometimes take upon itself to assume."

Jane More had gradually lengthened her almost daily walk, with her infant niece, until it extended itself to a seat on the common; whence the eyes of little Jenny were first greeted with the sight of slender spires, of shooting grass, and the tender green of budding foliage.

One lovely morning in June, with her baby niece in her arms, Jane descended the stairs, equipped for her usual stroll. She found a gentlemanly-looking stranger standing in the outer door, in such a way as to prevent their egress. After a few moments' hesitation, Jane requested permission to pass.

"A thousand pardons! I was not aware of your approach," he cried, hastily stepping aside. "I hope I have not detained you."

In attempting to pass him, Jenny, attracted by the glitter of the stranger's heavy gold watch-guard, by one of those quick infantile movements so common to childhood, caught at, and firmly clutched, the chain in her tiny fingers. Another instant, and the hand of the stranger closed over the truant fingers that had made so free with his personal adornments.

"Ah! a babe, is it?"

Jane looked up in astonishment at a question so evidently needless, and saw, for the first time, that the large lustrous eyes of the stranger were expressionless, neither bent on herself or her charge—that the handsome and elegant questioner was blind.

"Is it your own, madam?"

"O dear, no, sir," she replied, slightly reddening; "I am its aunt, and I am going to take it out for a walk." Then, as if apprehensive of having been too communicative to one so utterly a stranger, she would have hurried on.

"Pardon, madam," he said, detaining her by a gesture; "but may I ask, without risk of being deemed obtrusive, if your walk extends in any particular direction?"

To this question, so courteously put, Jane replied by a civil negative.

"Then I will even beg of you to do me a favor, which the kindness of your voice emboldens me to hope may not be refused me. But first, you should know who I am, which is easily told. My name is Walgreen. I rent the better part of the first floor here, and occupy the same occasionally, when disposed for rest and quiet. The second floor was my first choice, but I resigned it to a Mr. Leroy, through the representations of a friend of his that it was the old home of the family."

"Mr. Leroy is the father of this little one," interposed Jane.

"Indeed! and may I ask if you are a member of the same household?"

"No, sir; I live in the house at the next corner."

He inclined his head, and waited, as if to hear more.

Jane fidgeted, looked at his handsome open face with a shy,

awkward air, and finally said: "If you care to know it, which very few persons do, my name is More—Jane More."

"Thank you, Miss More; now I may venture to tell you why I transgressed all rules of etiquette in thus presuming to enlist your good offices—if you do not refuse to grant my request—in behalf of an utter stranger. I gave the boy who usually goes out with me, an hour's leave of absence. He has overstaid his time; and I am very anxious to go to the lower end of the next street, where a poor crippled child is waiting for me to give him a lesson on the flute. I hate to disappoint the little fellow, for in music he finds his only pleasure; and if you will give me the babe, and take my other arm, for the short distance I wish to go, I will be deeply obliged to you."

What could Jane do, but express her willingness to confer so simple a favor?

Jenny, whose little life had been spent in such an atmosphere of love and tenderness that she had never learned to know fear, went freely to the arms of the stranger. He walked singularly erect, with his head somewhat thrown back; for where was the use of bending his sightless eyes toward the ground?

At first, Jane rested her hand on his arm with a painful feeling of shyness at her anomalous position as escort to an utter stranger; but his perfect ease and air of unconcern speedily restored her composure.

"I heard Mr. Leroy, from my back window, this morning, singing at his work. I almost envied him, his voice sounded so blithsome and strong. But then he has some one to care for him, and watch for his home-coming. It is a sweet, cheery voice I sometimes hear speaking to him over the bannisters, when he returns from his work. A sister, I presume: he lost his wife, I think I was told."

"Yes; she was my sister. Poor Elvira! It must be Miss Verne whom you hear speaking over the bannisters to Mr. Leroy. He saved her life from a wreck at sea, when she was quite a child; and she has lived with him nearly ever since, and seems as near to him as a sister, I dare say."

Already was Jane beginning to feel remarkably at ease with

this stranger who could not wound that jealous self-love it was the daily struggle of her life to subdue, by instituting invidious comparisons between her own scarred and disfigured face and the symmetrical features of those momently passing them by.

"Miss Verne," she resumed, "is my ideal of all that a woman should be; and I would give the whole world if I could be like her."

Mr. Walgreen's air of polite indifference suddenly gave place to one of pleased interest, as, slightly inclining his head toward his companion, "Surely," he observed, "it is strong presumptive evidence of goodness in one woman, if she can find it in her heart to warmly praise goodness in another of her sex."

"Well, sir, your presumptive evidence doesn't amount to much in my case, for I have the sense to appreciate goodness—though it's little enough of it I've found—in others; but when it comes to practicing it myself, it's dreadfully up-hill work, I do assure you; and, with the best of intentions, I fail twenty times a day," was Jane's blunt rejoinder.

"At all events, you have the virtue of sincerity," said Mr. Walgreen, smiling.

"Why, yes; if it is a virtue. I believe no one can any more accuse me of deceitfulness than of—of—amiability, or any other beautiful trait of character. I have a habit, an unfortunate one, I suppose, since it wins me few friends, of saying exactly what I think, on every occasion, in season and out of season."

"A habit so greatly in contrast with those of the majority of my acquaintances, that I shall find it infinitely refreshing, by way of variety; that is, if you do not object to my improving an acquaintance so casually commenced."

Jane was silent, and a little flush rose to her face. She began to be conscious of having violated some of the proprieties, in thus giving a stranger so good an opportunity for thus addressing her.

"You do not speak," he resumed; "if there is any reason why a farther acquaintance with your humble servant would be undesirable on your part, I should be pleased if you would frankly tell me what it is."

Jane glanced at his plain but expensive clothing, at his delicately gloved hands, and the dark locks of his glossy hair giving plain evidence of the barber's skill, before replying :

"You live in very different style from what I have been accustomed to—it would not be pleasant."

"Thank you," he rejoined, without seeming to notice the ambiguity of her reply. "Is that all ?"

"No one ever seeks my acquaintance, or thinks it worth seeking," she said sadly. "I have few associates—fewer friends."

"So much the more reason why their number should be increased."

"But there is a reason why I should shrink from society, and society from me."

She felt him recoil from her, and with the quick instinct of a sensitive nature withdrew her hand from his arm.

"Here is the house at which you wish to stop, Mr. Walgreen, —the child, if you please."

"One moment—this reason—tell it me."

"I met with an accident when quite a child," she said with effort, tears sounding through her voice, "which disfigured me for life. I have but one eye ; my face is hideously scarred ; and, altogether, I am frightful to behold. Different from all the world, I seek the society of no one, and am best off alone."

Low as she had spoken, the well-trained ear of her listener had detected in her voice the plaintive wail of a goaded spirit, then caught trace, in her burning accents, of the fierce agony of years ; and a chord which had sometimes vibrated to similar emotions was touched in his own heart. He restored the babe to her arms.

"Good morning, Miss More ; I shall see you again."

He held out his hand. At first she half resolved not to see it ; but his air of respectful courtesy had its effect, and, hastily laying her fingers in his palm, she rapidly pursued her way.

"Dear me, why must I go and make a fool of myself, when there wasn't the least occasion for it ?" she impatiently asked herself. "Do I not receive enough pity from others, such as it is, —that contemptuous sort of pity we give to what we loathe,

then straightway forget it for something more pleasant to look upon—that I should go and excite the compassion of this stranger, by furnishing him with a gratuitous map of my vile physiognomy? What cares he, whether my face is like a baked sweet apple, or a smooth cheeked peach? Oh me! the old wicked feelings are coming back again: I must not give way to them. I will not forget my many blessings—freedom from pain—returning strength—sweet slumbers at night—God's blessed air and sunshine, and this dear little one to share them with me, and keep me from growing cold and selfish. No; I will be very humble and grateful. But it is best for me to be alone. It was this stranger who disturbed the calm flow in which my life was beginning to run. I will not see him again. I will not even think of him."

For several weeks, Jane went quite early in the morning, to give her little namesake her daily airing, so that Mr. Walgreen found no opportunity of improving his acquaintance with her, even had he been desirous of so doing. But one day it rained the entire morning through; and it was not till afternoon that she was able to take her way to Mr. Leroy's. There she found a thin, pale woman, whom she had never seen before, sitting with Ellen. The former was coughing violently, one hand pressing her side, the other holding her handkerchief to her lips. Both women had evidently been weeping.

"We have all lost a friend," said Ellen, impressively, as she grasped the hand Jane silently proffered.

"My father!" was Jane's first impulsive exclamation.

"No," replied Ellen; "we have no fresh intelligence from him: it is good Dr. Johnde who has left us. Although he has been incurably consumptive these twenty years, yet his death, after but a few days confinement to his house, seems distressingly sudden."

For a few minutes, there was no other sound than that of an occasional stifled sob in the room. Jane was the first to break the silence.

"How he bore with me, and strengthened and consoled me, when I was unreasonably self-willed, and half mad with pain!

I seem to hear his kind voice now, as I never shall hear it again."

"He was always ready to bear with the weakest, as I also can testify," said the pale stranger, who was none other than our old acquaintance Mrs. Ames. "He was physician and friend to all who applied for his services. He was one of those rarely disinterested men who could make another's case his own, and really do as he would be done by. I have but just come from his funeral. You should have seen what swarms of poor people lined the street—old patients whom he had attended gratuitously as well as myself—and how every head was bared when his coffin was brought out of the house, although it was raining all the while. It is no make-believe mourning that follows a man like him to his last rest."

When, after a time, her face still bearing traces of tears, Jane slowly descended the stairs, the soft, low breathings of music that fell on her ear were like whispered words of holy soothing to her grieved spirit. Almost involuntarily, she paused before the open door of the room in which Mr. Walgreen was sitting with his back towards her, at the piano, which responded in plaintive murmurs to the light sweep of his slender fingers.

No danger of detection, so she assures herself; for the player is too much absorbed in his own efforts to have heard her approach; and, even should he pause, she could easily escape unseen.

And pause he did, sooner than she could have anticipated; and, turning his head over his shoulder, said very quietly, to a young boy whom she had not hitherto seen:

"Give Miss More a seat, Edmond; the sound of the piano may amuse the child."

Nothing loath, Edmond threw down the slate he had been covering with rude carricatures, in lieu of "sums" from the open arithmetic lying beside him, and hastened to do as he had been bidden.

Not a little inclined to beat a hasty retreat, and only withheld by a feeling of shame from so doing, Jane reluctantly took a seat on the sofa, instead of accepting the chair Edmond had

r her, close to the piano. The boy at once devoted
) the amusement of little Jenny, whom he soon suc-
luring from the arms of her aunt. Round the room,
object of interest to another, he noiselessly bore the lit-
ı; now stopping before some rare piece of statuary his
arge was little likely to appreciate, and anon holding
before some exquisite painting whose glittering frame
ht her babyish fancy. Jane's eyes also rested on the
ıdorning the walls, and she asked herself of what use
d be to one who never saw them.
nticipating this self-asked question, Mr. Walgreen re-
t, without interrupting the delicious flow of harmony
'om beneath his fingers.
: paintings, Miss More, are sacredly preserved as me-
' my gifted artist friend, whose hand lost its cunning
e grave. It was in this house he died. Look at the
your right, if you please. It is pronounced by con-
an admirable copy of Raphael's 'holy family.' The
e Madonna is called very lovely; but, to me, beauty is
ıe."
vords, so carelessly spoken, were, to Jane, of significant
Beauty but a name? to her its reverse had been a full
tterness.
:. Walgreen! thou can't touch that "harp of a thou-
ıgs," the human heart, as skilfully as the instrument
s such sweet incense to thy soft compulsion.
d carried the babe into the next room, in search of
ıts; and Mr. Walgreen, soon after, rose from the
l drew a chair for himself beside the sofa.
ret exceedingly, Miss More, that I should have been
unate as to incur your displeasure, the last and only
'er had the pleasure of seeing you," he said, with a
dignity and sweetness of manner which Jane did
r that he rarely assumed in addressing others. She
l slightly that he should speak of "seeing," and only
ıdirectly to his state of blindness. "May I not
e went on, "that you will pardon the rude inquisi-

tiveness that induced me to inquire so closely into the motives that made you not unwilling to decline my acquaintance?"

"I never so much as dreamed of your having been rudely inquisitive, or of having done anything requiring pardon," she warmly averred.

"Then why have you so strenuously avoided me, for all this time?"

Jane was mute with silent embarrassment.

"I fear you will be tempted to withdraw the pardon, so readily accorded, if it only emboldens me to go on with these importunate questionings."

"O, no; I only hesitated because I didn't quite know how to answer you. I might say that I had *not* avoided you: but I hate deception and equivocation of every kind."

"Not more than I do; so, if not disagreeable to yourself, tell me why you have frustrated all my attempts at seeing you since our walk."

His manner was eminently respectful; his look grave even to sadness. Thus Jane was disarmed of all coldness and restraint, but her face burnt like fire as she replied—

"I was vexed with myself for having talked of little else than my own miserable self, the whole time I was with you."

"Well, what was there to be vexed about, in that? Did you think me unworthy of the slight degree of confidence you thus reposed in me?"

"Nothing of the kind, most certainly. But when there were so many things to have talked about, why must I go and tell all about my being a hideous fright to look upon? A great sight you must have cared for such a piece of information."

"Perhaps I care for it more than you think: you know the homely old adage about misery loving company. The fact is, I am a much vainer person than yourself, and have no fears of proving tedious to you, while relating the outlines of my own history, if you will consent to listen to the same."

sed and flattered, Jane readily pronounced herself a auditor, and he thus began :

r father was a farmer in a small way, in one of the in-wns of our old Bay State ; and a man of rare probity rightness of character. He was by no means bril-gifted, in an intellectual point of view ; much less so, than my mother, who had been preceptress of an ıy before marriage. Nevertheless, they were not an rted couple, as she more and more revered that moral nce and singleness of purpose, which, year by year, hemselves more conspicuous in his character. My d was a happy one : With many comforts, we had no s, and we had never learned to feel their need. My ster, Adelia, was four years younger than myself; ul as a wildwood flower, and as delicate : she inhe rit-onchial weakness from our mother, who was consump-When I was sixteen, my father, with much effort and rifice on the part of the family, of which I was not at e aware, sent me to college. In the long winter va-I taught the school in our own district ; and was thus l to board at home, and extend, in a measure, to my who was an apt scholar, the advantages of my own acquired lore."

ɔw her the figures on your chess-board; or perhaps ninoes would catch her eye." This to Edmond, who urned to the room. Then to Jane :

I trespassing too long on your patience, Miss More ?"
, indeed ; I am grateful for your confidence.'"

en I may proceed. At college I was not unmindful of rifices—although but partially comprehending their —made to keep me there ; and, as the only return, my power to make, strove to achieve distinction in ss. I overstudied; my health did not fail, but my id. A physician was consulted, who pronounced the erve to be severely strained ; and said my eyes must erfect rest, or he could not answer for the conse-s. Hard as it was, I left my studies—I was nearly

through my sophomore year—and went home to work on the farm. After a while, I was so much improved in sight, that I ventured to go back to my studies. I found great benefit from the use of cold water; and, by frequently bathing my eyes with it, managed to maintain a respectable position in my class, until near the close of the term; when the pain became almost insupportable, and I resolved not to begin a new term. There was no redness, or other symptom of disease, about my eyes; they simply ached, and that excruciatingly.

"One evening, I was studying in my room alone, with a wet towel bound about my forehead, when I rushed from my chair, and dashed about the room, half frantic with agony. Then came a crash, I can describe it in no other way, in the top of my head. I was stunned, as by a sudden blow; and fell on the floor, involuntary tears raining over my face.—When I was able to get up, somehow the light had gone out, in the confusion. I called to my chum, who was in the next room; and he came in hurriedly, asking how I had contrived to make so much noise, all by myself. Without replying, I begged him to light a lamp, as I felt ill. He came round and put his arm about my shoulder, before telling me that the lamp was burning. I trust I may never experience another such a moment as that in which I first knew that, for me, the light of life had departed. The blackness of darkness seemed to have fallen upon me, shutting me out from my fellows. My prospects in life, how changed! I could not look them in the face, without quailing. I have not spoken of that hour for years; and should not now speak so freely of my misfortune, if I were not sure of the entire sympathy of my hearer. My ear, since double duty has been required of it, has become doubly acute in its perceptions; and, brief as has been our acquaintance, I have already detected, in the tones of your voice, enough to let me know that you are no stranger to that unspoken sorrow which is hardest to bear. Only through suffering ourselves, do we learn to comprehend suffering in others. Is it not so?"

"I think you are right, Mr. Walgreen; but I dread to speak you a single word of pity, I so much dislike to have other pers ns pity me," was the reply, in accents so full of deep womanly mpathy, they would hardly have been recognized as proceed- g from Jane More of former days.

Both were for a short time silent, then Mr. Walgreen re- ımed:

"The next three months were the most miserable period of ıy life. I could think of nothing but my own blasted prospects. had hoped to do so much for my family, and instead I seemed estined to be a life-long burden to them. I had nothing to look ırward to; nothing to hope, nothing to live for. Already the ıble pall of blindness wrapped me in a living death. My health riously declined. My father became alarmed, and consulted an ninent physician, who strongly recommended my being sent to that lmirable institution for the blind, now located at South Boston. y good father did not hesitate to accept this advice, although e whole family were obliged to practice the most pinching econ- ıy in order to defray the necessary expenses of the under- ting."

The speaker was interrupted by a pull at the door-bell. Ed- ınd ran in from the next room, and hastily restoring the babe Jane, obeyed the summons.

There was a rustle of silken robes in the hall, followed by the ırance of a gentleman and two ladies, both young and fashion- ly attired.

"How do you do, Mr. Walgreen? We are hoping to find ı famously well, after this charming summer rain."

The speaker was a rarely beautiful woman, in a robe of pearl ıcade; and her fair round shoulders gleamed dazzlingly white ·ough her wrought lace pelerine, while her bonnet, with its ıceful comminglings of ribbons, lace and tulle, was a triumph art which none but a Parisian *modiste* could have achieved.

"Ah, Mrs. Eglistoun, you do my poor rooms too much honor your presence; nevertheless you are heartily welcome."

This was spoken in a tone of the merest conventional gallantry, twithstanding which, the words were gall and wormwood to

poor Jane, who absolutely sickened at sight of so much elegance and beauty.

The usual forms of reception being over, the lady who had accompanied Mrs. Eglistoun was the first to speak.

"I have taken the liberty, Mr. Walgreen," she commenced, laying a sheet of music on the open piano, with an air of the utmost assurance, "of bringing you an aria, which, so a friend writes me, is a gem of the first water, but it is so difficult that I have been able to make little of it. Now, you play so divinely, that, if you would but let your boy read it over to you, so that you could play it to me at the first opportunity and just show me a little how it ought to go, I would be infinitely obliged to you."

All the while that Miss Bennett, for she it was, had been speaking, Mrs. Eglistoun had been casting upon Jane More looks of unaffected commiseration, which glances were felt by their recipient as a species of contemptuous affront.

"She is blessing her stars that she is not as I am," thought Jane; "proud, self-complacent beauty! I hate her."

While Mr. Walgreen, with the most winning courtesy, was expressing his pleasure at the opportunity of obliging Miss Bennett, her brother, with a glass at his eye, was favoring Jane with a broad stare, in which superciliousness and contempt were pretty equally blended. The look, literally translated, ran in this wise:

"'Pon my soul! always thought Walgreen was an eccentric, every inch of him; but to find this ordinarily dressed young woman, with a face like the battered figure-head of some crazy old sea-craft, a baby in the mess too, sitting here in his very parlor, it's uncommonly odd, deuce take me if 'tisn't, now."

Jane's face burnt like fire during this insolent scrutiny; and, while Mr. Walgreen was still speaking, she glided unheeded from the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JUST WHAT THE READER EXPECTED.

When Jane More reached the street, after her unceremonious exit from Mr. Walgreen's, her heart was swelling ready to burst, with mortification and resentment. The old feeling of reckless defiance, for the moment, held dominion over her better nature.

"If I had borne the mark of Cain on my brow, he could not have looked upon me with greater abhorrence," she bitterly assured herself, as she thought of Mr. Bennett's insolent stare. "Well, I can bear it, and whatever else of evil a *kind* Providence has in store for me. Men do not look for figs on brambles; but pain and sorrow come from Him who the Dispenser of all *good*."

Her face showed the workings of the evil spirit within her.

This the little child in her arms divined, as it looked up at her, and its lips quivered and its eyes filled with tears, ere yet the wail of infantile grief burst from its lips.

Jane, startled, looked down into the little quivering face, and her own softened.

"It is the first time," she murmured regretfully, "that Jenny was ever afraid of her aunt. Elvira's little one must not learn to shrink from me."

She tenderly soothed the babe, insensibly soothing herself the while. Dropping her heavy veil over her face, there, in the crowded street, with lowliest self-abasement, she cried out in silent petition:

"Help me, O my Father! to drive out this evil spirit of envy and uncharitableness that possesseth me. Help, Lord, for in the hour of temptation my own strength faileth me."

Humility and penitence bring haply their own reward. Her face gradually brightened into serenity. She had gained that most difficult of all earthly conquests to achieve—the conquest of one's own spirit. Lighter and freer grew her footsteps as the "still small voice" within gave forth the song of victory, unheard by all save her.

Mr. Walgreen was pacing back and forth in the hall, when Jane entered the outer door of the same. She would have passed him without speaking, but paused when he pronounced her name.

"You left me very abruptly," he said; "may I ask you why?"

"I will tell you some other time," she replied; "not to-night, I am too weary."

"Then sit down and rest yourself. I promise to detain you but a moment, for I would know why you are sad, as well as weary."

Before she had time to object, he had placed a chair for her, and seated himself on the stairs.

"Now, Miss More, for a full confession! When I looked around, to introduce you to my other callers, I found you had gone, without so much as a word of good-bye. I would have the reason of this sudden flight."

"Then you were really intending to introduce me to your fashionable friends?"

"As a matter of course; but why do you lay such stress on the performance of so trivial a ceremony?" he asked with an air of surprise.

"If you had seen the look the gentleman of the party favored me with, you would have no occasion to ask the question," she rejoined, an accent of unconscious bitterness struggling in her tones, at the recollection.

"You speak in enigmas, Miss More; I fail to catch your meaning."

"Well, his glance seemed to ask why a person so insignificant, so repulsive, as myself, should dare to intrude into such worshipful company."

"Insolence!" exclaimed Mr. Walgreen, with an indignant flush; "how dared he annoy one whose friendship I am earnestly desirous of gaining, by so much as a look? In my own room, too! I beg you to believe that, had I been aware of your annoyance, I would have found some means of putting a stop to it."

How grateful to poor Jane this earnest, respectful consideration, she was so little in the habit of receiving!

"Rudeness to a woman!" Mr. Walgreen resumed; "I can well believe it of him; but I am less able to comprehend how a person of his shallow intellect could have so deeply wounded you. Now, I have so thorough a contempt for the man, that, to me, his good or bad opinion would be matter of profound indifference. With Mrs. Eglistoun, it would be quite another matter; for she is of a higher and nobler nature than Mr. Bennett. She, assuredly, could have had no part in driving you away."

"Don't think me silly, as I am afraid you will, and unhealthily sensitive too, when I tell you it made me feel really wicked when she looked at me as though, for the whole world, she wouldn't change places with me."

"And do you suppose the whole world would tempt her to change places with *me*?"

Jane was, for a moment, too much embarrassed at this sudden turn in the conversation to reply, but quickly rallied.

"O, you are very different, Mr. Walgreen. You have friends, fortune, and—and you're not a fright. No one shrinks from you, or avoids you."

"Not so fast, Miss More; some one whose acquaintance I have particularly sought, and, furthermore, craved as an especial boon, both shrinks from and avoids me; even going so far as to leave me, right in the midst of a recital of my own past sufferings, without so much as a word of regret at the interruption. I am not a sensitive man, or one easily slighted, which fact accounts for my not having worked myself into quite a fever of resentment at all this neglect."

"You see things in such a different light from other persons," Jane suggested, not ill-pleased at the idea of its being possible for any one to feel resentment at neglect on her part.

"There is no such thing as *light* for me," he rejoined, a momentary shade clouding his fine features.

"I am sorry I said anything to remind you of your great deprivation," Jane said very gently; "and some other time, if not painful to you, I will gladly hear as much more of your his-

tory as you will be kind enough to tell me; but, for to-night, I must go."

"My best wishes attend you, until we meet again."

A few days later, aunt and niece were occupying one of the benches which our lovely Common offers to tired pedestrians, when a boyish voice cried out, "There's the pretty little child that likes me so well; can't we stop and speak to her?"

A minute later, Mr. Walgreen was sitting on the bench, beside Jane, while that tiny maiden, her niece, was staring with great, wondering eyes, at all the sights with which Edmond, carrying her about in his strong arms, succeeded in diverting her.

"You told me," said Jane, after the first salutations were over, "that you went to the asylum at South Boston; how long did you remain there?"

"A number of years; and it was not until I was able to earn sufficient to pay my own way, by teaching younger members of the institution and laboring in the work-room, that I received the sad news of my father having been suddenly prostrated by sun-stroke. My mother never held up her head after his death, but soon followed him in a rapid decline. My poor orphaned sister, at my instance, disposed of what little property was left. Of course I had intended her to apply the proceeds to her own support, instead of which, she so invested them that the income would be mine; and, contrary to my desires, went to the city of New York, where she succeeded in procuring a situation as semptress in a family of wealth and high respectability. She was soon promoted, however, to the post of governess, which she was well calculated to fill. In the course of the year, came her second promotion to the office of help-mate to the bachelor uncle of her young pupils. His age was nearly double her own; but the marriage proved an eminently happy one.

"They had been nearly two years married, when he was fatally wounded in one of those frightful rail-road collisions unfortunately of but too frequent occurrence in our go-ahead country. He lingered on, in weeks of anguish, until death mercifully came to his relief. Among his effects was found a will, bequeathing the bulk of his large fortune to Adelia. She had

always been delicate in health, but never attacked by direct illness. Now, however, her whole system seemed prostrated by the grief and anxiety she had gone through, and the insidious disease she had inherited from our mother began to show itself. A racking cough set in, accompanied by rapid emaciation and decay of strength. Her physicians recommended an immediate voyage to the south of Europe. I went with her to Italy. I hurry over this period of my life. It was very painful to know that she—the last near relative now spared to me—was wasting, inch by inch, wasting away at my side.

"Change of air and scenery wrought no improvement in her malady. She died on our homeward voyage, and was buried in the cold blue sea. Then I had a terrible illness myself. A young artist, who was on his way to America, watched over me night and day, ministering to all my wants with more than a brother's tenderness. To his unremitting care, I have no doubt that I owe my ultimate recovery. But when I did recover, he made light of his services in my behalf, declaring he had found in them a relief from the tedium of the voyage. He was not the sort of man to whom one could offer material recompense for benefits conferred.

"I think Adelia must have had some misgivings as to the result of her voyage to a warmer clime before leaving New York; for, on reaching that city, I found that, before sailing, she had had her will drawn up and properly attested; therein directing that her property should be divided into two equal portions, one of the same to descend to myself, the other to revert to those who would have been her husband's legal heirs, if he had remained single.

"As soon as I had settled up my affairs in New York, I came on to Boston; the associations connected with the latter city being more agreeable to me than those of the former. I had no intention of returning to the asylum; but I liked to be so near that I could often see those who had been my companions while there. I knew that my artist friend had preceded me to the city of notions; and, after a long search, succeeded in tracing him to a miserable suit of lodgings, comprising an attic, bed-

room and garret. Studio just under the bare rafters of the sloping roof! How gladly would I have bestowed on him some substantial token of my grateful regard! but he uttered no word of complaint, no hint of privation; and, for the life of me, I couldn't broach the theme. The lofty presence of the man so dignified his mean surroundings, that I had not the courage to propose anything that he might construe into an offer of charitable aid.

"'When a dull public once recognizes me,' he said, with proud self-appreciation, 'I trust to have more fitting apartments in which to receive the few friends—I would not that their number were large—who honor me with their acquaintance. Greater artists than I, have had to wait—I can bide my time.'

"I think now, that, although a rarely gifted artist, he was too fastidious in the finish of his works to succeed in making money by his art. All I could do for him was to buy what few small pieces he had on hand, at as high a price as I could persuade him to accept. Even this I had some difficulty in effecting; he, all the while, insisting that I had no need of paintings; and it was only by declaring that I strongly desired to possess them as mementoes of his past kindness, that I succeeded in obtaining them. After that, I had an attack of influenza, which confined me to the house for several days. During this time I sent him several anonymous presents of articles which I judged might be useful to him. When I was able to go out again, I found that he had changed his lodgings; and, with all my searching, I could find no clue to his new place of abode. He only sent for me when conscious that he was in a dying condition. It was too late; all my care could not save him then. Want and disappointment had done their fatal work. 'Ah, Mr. Walgreen,' he said, sadly, 'your new world is even more slow than the old to recognize the true artist: my strength is gone; I may not bide my time.' These were the only words of complaint I ever heard him utter. He wished me to send a letter to a lady in England, together with a pair of small, unframed paintings, whose faces were turned to the wall. It was only after his death that the nurse told me one of the paintings was a

portrait of himself, the other, that of a young and lovely woman. I was obliged to examine the address of the letter to know what name to have put on the box in which I had the portraits packed; and found it directed to 'Lady Adelaide Heathfield.'"

The speaker paused, with a look of troubled memory on his face. "I have done, Miss More; and I thank you for listening with so much patience to my old reminiscences."

"I ought rather to thank you; but I am almost sorry you should have recalled the past, if it has pained you."

They both rose.

"Are we going home now?" asked Edmond, immediately joining them.

"Is the little one ready to go?" asked Mr. Walgreen, turning to Jane for a reply.

"I have already stayed longer than I intended," was the rather embarrassed answer.

"Then you will carry the child, Edmond, if Miss More does not refuse me the favor of taking my arm."

It was thus they returned.

A month after this accidental meeting on the Common, Jane was once more passing the room in which Mr. Walgreen sat at his piano. This was not the first time, by many, that she had seen him, in the course of the month; for he had succeeded in obtaining an introduction to Mr. Leroy and Ellen; and already was looked upon as a true friend of the family. They had all accompanied him, Jane of course included in the number, in a drive to that beautiful "garden of the dead," Mount Auburn; and, leaving the carriage at the gate, had strolled through its shrubberied walks and flower-bordered avenues, Mr. Walgreen striving to gain some conception of its many master-pieces in sculpture, from the descriptions of his companions.

As Jane paused at the open door, the light, simple air he had been playing changed to one of mournful and touching sadness—fit accompaniment for the sobs and moans of human sorrow. Jane, for the first time, perhaps, in her life, felt the full power of music. Tears gushed to her eyes, as, under the influence of

its fascination, she drew nearer the player. She almost held her breath, when this low, sorrowing wail merged itself in the louder and angrier tones of fierce, defiant rebellion. Jangled and discordant, harsh and tumultuous, swelled forth the pealing sounds which spoke a new language to Jane's stirred spirit. She listened intently. The discord was losing itself in sweet, harmonious measure, soft as the south wind's breath on the violets' bank. A single gushing trill of joy, another and another, swelling forth into a full triumphant peal of rapturous exultation.

Jane, with a long-drawn, unconscious sigh, drew back a pace from the performer. She had not time to effect a retreat, before, turning on the stool, he caught her hand, and led her, the tears still wet on her cheek, to a seat beside himself on the sofa.

"Did you think I did not know you were here, Miss More? Why, I have been waiting for you this full hour, since I heard your step ascending the stairs. If my playing had not stopped you, as I intended, I should have found some other means of detaining you."

"Then you knew, all the while, that I was listening to you," said Jane, striving to speak in her ordinary tone.

"Assuredly, or why should I have striven to body forth your life in music? Was the skill of the player so poor, that you failed to recognize your own experience?"

"Not *my* experience, Mr. Walgreen; at least there has been nothing in my life like the joy and gladness the last part of your playing expressed."

"Not yet, perhaps; but is it yet too late?"

His cheek reddened, and he bent his head toward her, earnestly awaiting her reply.

"I am not complaining," she hastily replied; "I have many blessings for which I hope I am not ungrateful. But the sort of happiness of which your music told is not for me. For anything higher than content I never hope."

She was quite calm; but he was fluttered and eager when next he spoke.

"*But* I would have you rise into something higher and sweeter

than mere passive content. I would fain see your clouded life brighten into sunshine. To the accomplishment of this result, I would gladly devote the remainder of my days. Jane, do you not understand? I would have you my wife—my very own."

Jane could only stare at the speaker in dumb astonishment. The possibility of receiving an offer of marriage, and from *him*, had never so much as visited her dreams.

She recovered herself with an effort.

"O, Mr. Walgreen! you would not be so cruel as to say such words to me in mockery, but, for your own sake, forget them; I am too truly your friend, to let you throw yourself away on one so unworthy of you."

"Your words make me a bold wooer," he said, taking her cold and trembling hand in his own. "I had thought to pass through life unloved and alone. Forgive me if I say I could never have asked a woman gay, beautiful, beloved, to have wasted her charms on my sightless vision. Accustomed to admiring glances from other eyes, how would such an one (supposing myself capable of winning her) have missed what my own could never have given. But you, Jane, like myself, have known peculiar affliction; and have learned, through suffering, that quick sympathy which, to me, is infinitely more precious than the beauty which, to one blind, is no more than a name. In a measure shut out from the world, why may we not be all the world to each other? With your permission——"

Even as he spoke, he passed his hand gently over her face. With what keenness of vision her eye watched the expression of his own countenance, as his slender fingers passed over her features! The faintest token of surprise, even, at the extent of her disfigurement, would have driven her from his side, at a single impulsive bound. But none such came; and the full tide of crimson swept up to her very temples, when he suddenly concluded his scrutiny, if I may so term it, by kissing her glowing but misshapen lips. Perhaps it was as well that he could not see her; for the very vividness of her blushes served to bring out into bolder relief the unsightly seams and scars, on which his fingers had so lightly and tenderly rested.

"You have not answered me," he murmured, bending over the face he had drawn to his shoulder.

"You will bear with my infirmities of temper?" she queried, without repulsing the arm that encircled her.

"I will bear and forbear, with anything and everything, so long as you bless me with your full love and confidence. You need not tell me that I have them now; for I already know it; and twenty denials from the lips that did not shrink from my own would not drive me to despair."

"It shall be the study of my life to become more worthy of you."

What further need of words? Unquestioningly the long-neglected, almost despised, Jane More surrendered herself to the delicious consciousness of being an object of supreme regard to one whom she looked upon as the very embodiment of a noble and upright manhood. The full flood of joy swept from her heart those envyings and repinings which her most strenuous efforts had scarcely succeeded in rooting out. With one heart, steadfast and true, beating for herself alone, what could she not bear from others?

After all, had not her seeming misfortune been, in reality, the crowning blessing of her life?—The indirect promoter of her highest happiness? Without *that* would she have been Mr. Walgreen's choice?

Of a verity, the loving hand of a wise Father oftentimes leads his children to founts of joy, by an unseen path that they knew not of.

CHAPTER XXX.

SPENDIDLY MARRIED.

A WOMAN, young and very lovely, sits in her warm and richly furnished dressing-room, about whose heavily draped window panes the bleak winds of March howl mournfully and long; for

The winter has come and gone, bringing with it few changes worthy of record to the principal personages of our humble tale. Young and lovely, as I said before, is the lady; but a shade of weariness clouds her fair brow, as she murmurs languidly:

"The last party of the season, I do fervently hope; for I am really worn out with these late hours. I would have rest and quiet."

She removes a tiny watch from her purple belt inwrought with threads of gold. Two hours past midnight is the hour it tells.

From her white, rounded arm she unclasps a pearl bracelet and lays it in the rich jewel-box glittering with gems. Exchanging her robe of brocade for a loose white wrapper, she commences taking down the heavy braids, in which her soft brown hair had been looped up from her neck. In her efforts a string of pearls becomes entangled in her braided locks; and she places herself between two mirrors, in order to get a better view of the back of her head. The door opens, without so much as a warning tap, and a tall, haughty looking gentleman unceremoniously enters the apartment. There is about him the unmistakable air of ownership in all he surveys.

"Ah! Grahame, I am glad you have come; for now you will help me reduce this unruly braid to order."

"Where is your maid?"

These few simple words contained a volume of reproach, that his wife should seek to extort from him, Grahame Eglistoun, Esq., the duties of a tire-woman. His look was well calculated to frown down any such presumption, for the future.

"Poor Myra! she has been far from well, for these few days past," the first speaker rejoined, in a mild conciliatory tone; "and I expressly forbade her sitting up for me; she really was not able to do it."

"If she is not strong enough to perform the duties for which she is paid, dismiss her, and procure one better able to serve your purpose; there are plenty of them to be had."

The indignant flush which mounted to the face of the fair listener was her sole reply. Her whole being revolted against the

thought of dismissing a faithful and devoted attendant, on account of a mere temporary indisposition. She could not learn to regard her servants as mere machines, to be exchanged for others, the moment they were out of working order.

The gentleman resumed: "You do not ask me, Laura, why I intrude upon you at this unseasonable hour; but I will tell you, in few words, and not keep you longer from your rest."

"You are heartily welcome, Grahame, at any and every hour. I am sure I ought to prize your society for its rarity: certainly you never overburden me with your presence. Why, I do believe you have not so much as spoken to me this whole evening long."

Just the faintest shade of annoyance crossed his face.

"Gentlemen scarcely go to balls, I apprehend, to play the agreeable to their own wives."

"Then I do wish you would let me see a little more of you at home. To tell you the truth, I am tired, I had almost said jealous, of all these midnight entertainments that keep us forever apart."

He recoiled from her a step or two.

"Not jealous, Laura! You surely do not mean *that*. A woman full of insane jealousies and degrading suspicions would be utterly abhorrent to me. Pardon me, with such an one I really could not live."

Laura raised her eyes calmly to his face.

"And 'such an one,' Grahame, I have given you no cause to consider me. But just think, yourself, how little I see of you. We have not had a quiet half-hour's chat with each other in a month. There is always something to keep you away from me. In the summer you were off on a yachting excursion, and away with your sporting friends in the country when fall came."

"But I always left you comfortable, with every possible luxury and amusement at command."

"Yes; but all these could not atone for the loss of my husband's society."

"Your husband ought certainly to be highly flattered by so marked a preference for his society," was the cool response, in a

tone of such utter indifference as to bring a tingling blush to the cheeks of his wife.

"Pardon," he said in a kinder tone; "I am not one of the doting, sentimental sort. You must strive to make the best of me, as I am."

"Dear Grahame, I did not think of complaining of you; and if I am too demonstrative—too much inclined to exact a full return for the deep affection I bear you, is it not a fault on the right side? Will you not overlook it, if it annoys you?"

She spoke in tremulous tones, and with tears in her eyes.

"Yes, yes; don't work yourself into such a state of excitement about the merest trifle, or you will spoil your good looks for to-morrow; just when I would have you look your very best, too, for I expect a couple of gentlemen to dine with me, and report has told them of Mrs. Eglistoun's beauty. I would not that the reality should fall short of their expectations. So, retire as soon as you can, in order to be in your best bloom to-morrow, if you would please me."

"For others' eyes, not for his own," thought Laura, as, after carelessly touching her cheek with his lips, he left the room.

Immovable as a statue she sat for a time, lost in anxious thought.

"Yes, it must be so," she murmurs at last; "I repel and disgust him by this unwomanly proffer of affection—such proffer should come from *him* alone. Hereafter I will be more chary of soft words. My unobtrusive devotion must win its return at last. I will wait. But how long? Ah! how long?"

While thus the heart of the mistress was disquieted within her, the ailing maid, whose absence had caused Mr. Eglistoun so much discontent, slept soundly and well. Poor Myra! none other is she than our old acquaintance Elmira Jane Gurdy, who, by sad reverses, has been reduced to her present dependent position; and quite as comfortable she finds it, as the life she had formerly been accustomed to lead. A word as to the train of circumstances that had rendered all Mrs. Gurdy's thrift of no avail, and irrevocably frustrated all her ambitious designs in her daughter's behalf. The mother happened to be caught out in a

passing shower, when a man of rather flashy exterior, but highly plausible address, most graciously shared his umbrella with her, to the very door of her dwelling. This acquaintance, so casually commenced, speedily ripened into intimacy; and ended by an offer of marriage, accepted by the widow, who was not a little proud of the good looks and easy, dashing manners of the groom expectant. The honey-moon was but in its first quarter when the new-made husband, who had represented himself as wealthy and respectably connected, proposed selling the house and furniture belonging to his wife, preparatory to purchasing a fitting residence in a more desirable locality. This proposal, meeting the sanction of all concerned, was carried into effect; and, with the funds thus obtained, the husband forthwith decamped for parts unknown.

All efforts to discover the delinquent proved unavailing; although one of the officers employed to trace him recognized, in the daguerreotype which the deserted wife retained of her truant spouse, the well-known features of an old offender and fugitive from justice, who had already more than one nominal wife in different cities of the Union. Thus the lately triumphant bride, who had no legal right to the name she had assumed, was reduced to a state of utter destitution. She never held up her head afterwards; and, strangely enough, died in that very cellar-like apartment where Mrs. Ames and her children had so long languished.

No one could have been less fitted, both by education and early training, to earn her own subsistence than Elmira Jane. But something must be done; so, tying up her scant wardrobe in a pocket-handkerchief, the forlorn girl made her way, with fear and trembling, to an intelligence-office, where she applied for a situation as—she herself could hardly have told what. It was pity that induced Laura to select the downcast, sorrowful looking maid, from a crowd of more efficient applicants. Neither had seen cause to regret the choice. Shy, awkward, and delicate in health, Myra, as her mistress chose to designate her, repaid Laura's kindness and habitual consideration for her well-being with the most lavish gratitude and devotion.

Time sped on, and spring's caprices gave place to summer's gentler airs. Soft and balmy was the breeze that came in through the gauzy window-screen, rustling Laura's lace draperies as she sat at lunch, with her husband.

"The day is too deliciously fine to be spent in-doors," she remarked; "what say you to a drive out to the Walgreens, this afternoon?"

"I have an engagement for this afternoon; but some other day, I don't mind driving out there, for once in a way, although Walgreen is the very prince of eccentricities, and his wife an unmitigated fright."

"I know he is quite regardless of what he deems the prejudices of society—quite independent in doing that in which he sees no wrong; but his music is enchanting. Then his wife—her face is not unpleasant to me; at least not since she had that artificial eye inserted, and submitted to that painful operation that brought her mouth back to its proper position. Then, the husband and wife are so bound up in each other" (this with a little sigh) "that it does one good to look at them. There is a genial atmosphere about the whole house that seems to infect the very servants, who meet one at the door with smiling faces, that is, if all goes well with the family."

"Insolence! what business have they to be grinning in the faces of their superiors?" And Mr. Eglistoun emphasized his question by an indignant bite at the plump green fig freshly plucked from the hot-house.

"Surely, Grahame, it is much more agreeable to be served with willing hands and cheerful faces, than grudgingly, and with sour looks."

"Bah! I have something else to do than to waste my time in studying the humors of a set of crotchety servants. So long as they do their duty well and faithfully, they may wear what faces they like, for me. I don't pay them for friendship; *that* I will seek from my equals, if at all. But the subject is not worth wasting words about. Will not some other day do as well for visiting the Walgreens?"

"Quite as well; and if you are not going to use the carriage this afternoon, I will drive out to Mount Auburn with my mother; it is long since she was there."

"The carriage is, at all times, at your disposal: there is always my trotting buggy if I wish to go out alone. And pray, take your mother out as often as you like, only don't ask me to be of the party."

"O, Grahame, I wish you felt differently toward mamma."

"I shall always treat her with that civility which the nearness of our relationship demands; that is, so long as she makes no attempt to interfere with the affairs of my own household—to such interference I would never submit."

"And it is what mamma would never dream of attempting. If you only knew her better, you would not so wrong her, even in thought."

Mr. Eglistoun shrugged his shoulders, with an incredulous sort of smile; and Laura flushed painfully. The dearest wish of her heart—that of seeing her husband on more cordial and friendly terms with her own family—seemed as far as ever from being realized. It was not in her usual good spirits, that, leaning luxuriously back on the satin cushions of the carriage, she started for her mother's. They lived in a small dingy brick tenement now; for Mr. Avondale had been getting more and more deeply entangled in business perplexities; and somehow, with all her efforts, Laura had never succeeded in enlisting her husband's sympathy or aid in their behalf.

When Laura rang the bell of the humble dwelling, it was her mother who obeyed the summons. Pale and worn she looked, like one whose days are darkened by some ceaseless and corroding anxiety. Within the year, her hair had rapidly whitened, and her eyes lost much of their brilliancy.

The greeting of the daughter was much more cordial than that of the worn down, preoccupied mother. From the door-way in which she stood, she glanced out at the elegant carriage, the shining horses with their silver-mounted harnesses, which Laura had considerately left a few rods from the house.

"Would that the whole establishment were mine, for *his* sake," she impulsively cried: "he is so racked, so worn, and, oh child! he your own father."

"If it were only mine to give, I would bestow it on you with all my heart," Laura rejoined, with an unwonted tremor in her voice.

"I did not expect it of you, darling; yourself and all the rest belong to him now. Only let him be a good husband to you, tender and true, and I will ask no more. At all events, if I am reduced so low as to sue to him for help, 'twill be for another's sake; if I were alone in the world, I would sooner beg my bread in the street than solicit charity of him."

"Don't," pleaded Laura; "let us look on the bright side of things for this one day. Come out to Mount Auburn with me: I called on purpose for you, and the drive will do you good."

"I think it would; but the little girl who helps me in the kitchen is threatened with fever, and I cannot leave the poor thing alone."

After many inquiries regarding her father, all of which elicited but unsatisfactory replies, she pressed her purse into her mother's hand, only regretting that its contents were so small.

The fact was, Laura seldom had any large sum at her own disposal, not from any niggardliness in her husband's disposition towards her, but he so surrounded her with everything in the way of luxury, that he could see no possible use she could have for large sums of money.

It was with an added weight of oppression on her spirits, that Laura reëntered her carriage. It was no cheering reflection that, while herself surrounded with every form of luxury, those by whom she had been reared with tenderest nurture suffered from the pinchings of want. "I ought to have staid and tried to be of use to poor mamma," she thought; "but it was so unspeakably dreary there, in that little, blank-walled, uncurtained parlor, that I couldn't make up my mind to do it. But what I will do, is to beg and beseech of Grahame to come to their relief, for my sake. Let him cut down my own personal expenses, and

give the money thus saved to them. He surely cannot refuse me this."

Over the mill-dam, and along the smooth roads of Brookline, the carriage almost noiselessly rolled. But Laura, absorbed in her own troubled musings, scarcely saw the trim cottages and imposing country residences, embosomed in vines and shrubbery, which skirted the way.

Back through Roxbury they drove; and it was not until in the act of passing a beautiful villa that she recollected having long owed its inmates a call; and directing the coachman to drive up the short winding avenue leading to its rear, that the horses might stand in the shade of its closely bordering trees, she alighted, and by a narrow side-path ascended to the piazza. Her hand was already on the bell-knob, when the sound of a familiar voice on the street made her pause. Yes, it was her husband's voice, speaking in such clear, eager, ringing tones as she never remembered to have heard proceeding from his lips before. What could have so pleasantly excited him?

Where she stood, she could not see the street, which was considerably lower than the house, and furthermore screened from it by creepers and flowering shrubs. Stepping from the verandah, she ran down to a low-spreading evergreen, intending to surprise him by calling his name as he came past her hiding-place; but her purpose changed as she saw that he was riding in company with a lady. She was both young and fair; but seemed a timid and inexperienced horsewoman, as her attendant cavalier was giving her minute instructions for the management of the docile animal she rode. She was small in person, but of a full, well-rounded figure; and a profusion of light curls floated about her dimpled and smiling face. Her eyes were of the softest shade of blue; her complexion a delicate blonde; the low forehead giving no great token of intellect; the nose finely cut; the red, pouting lips voluptuously rounded; and the cleft chin rather receding than prominent.

Suddenly Mr. Eglistoun cast his eyes upon the very bank whereon his wife stood concealed; and Laura was ready to sink

the earth from fear of discovery. It was not of her he ight. Over the bank leaned a rose-bush, full of small red soms ; it was these that had attracted his gaze. Rising in stirrups, he broke off a single cluster of half-open flowers, gallantly presented them to his blushing, but evidently not leased companion, to whom he addressed a few softly spoken ds, of which Laura could only distinguish : "Mabel," and weet to thee, sweet."

t was the look by which these words were accompanied that le Laura's heart sink like lead in her breast. In his anima- countenance was such a warmth and glow of fervid passion he had never supposed his cold, impassive nature capable of laying—such as his face had never worn for her. A great exceeding bitter cry rent her spirit, and escaped in a feeble n from her lips. She clung to the tree for support ; and, for oment, everything grew dark about her. With wavering s and uncertain vision, she made her way back to the veran- . Even in such an hour, she noted, with a vague feeling of ef, that all the shutters were closed, so that no one could have n a witness to her misery. She leaned against a pillar until had in a measure composed herself, then rang the bell. The ant's "Not at home" sounded gratefully on her ears.

'To the house of my mother-in-law," she said to the coach- , as, with a heavy sigh, she threw herself back in a corner he carriage.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A POOR COMFORTER.

AT the house of the dowager Mrs. Eglistoun, Laura was shown the library, where she found Elmeira sitting alone.

After conversing for a while on indifferent topics, Laura ap- ached the subject of her thoughts by asking, in a tone of as- ed indifference—

"Does there happen to be a young lady by the name of Mabel on your list of acquaintances?"

"May I reply by asking why you wish to know?"

"I saw Grahame riding with a young lady of that name, and I was simply curious to know who she might be."

With all Laura's affectation of indifference, she was so poor an adept at dissimulation, that a less observant eye than that of her sister-in-law might have detected her perturbation, from her tremulous lips and varying color.

"What sort of a looking person is this Mabel, of whom you would enquire?" asked Elmeira, a shade of hesitancy and embarrassment in her air.

"I took a dislike, an antipathy if you will, to her face; and yet, by ordinary observers, I rather think she would be pronounced a sweet-looking girl. She is blonde in complexion, with small well-cut features, and a profusion of light curls floating about the cheeks. She is very youthful and girlish looking, in all respects."

"That is because she is so small and so fair; for Mabel Wheatly, if I am not much mistaken, is nearly as old as myself."

"Then you know her!"

"By sight—yes."

"Since when?"

"Since Grahame was fool enough to wish to marry the girl," —Laura started as though stung by a viper,—"and papa threatened to disinherit him if he didn't put such nonsense out of his head. Grahame was a silly, impulsive boy then, so different from what you ever knew him. There, you have the whole story now, as I saw you was determined to have it, so pray let's talk of something else. Let the dead past bury its dead, and not go to raking up its old ghosts to fright yourself withal. Wives should be content to take their husbands as they find them, (here her lips curled into one of those scornful sneers that sometimes distorted her expressive mouth,) and not enquire too closely into all their antecedents. Does not Thackeray, the truest satirist that ever wrote, declare that in every man's past experience there is some secret, guarded spot, securely walled about, close-locked,

nd the key thereof thrown where not even the wife of his bosom ay hope to find it! I should know nothing of such things, you ink; perhaps not, but a hard experience has taught me much f which I would gladly be ignorant."

"O, Elmeira! you make me shiver; for the bread of conso- tion I came to you, and you have given me a stone." And oor Laura, yes, *poor*, for was she not bankrupt in her husband's ffections? pressed her hand to her side, as if *there* she felt the ony weight.

"Forgive me," besought Elmeira, with real compassion in her ones; "I fear I am not the right one for you to come to; my wn past makes me bitter, perhaps unjust. That there are good en and true in the world, I would fain hope; it is not my fault, ut rather my misfortune, that so few of them have crossed my ath in life."

"What would you insinuate, Elmeira? Why was Grahame rbidden to marry Miss Wheatly?"

"I insinuate nothing, Laura. It was not of my brother I was inking when I spoke. Mabel Wheatly was a poor girl in a illiner's shop, without education or accomplishments. As soci- y goes, she was no fitting match for my brother, who, in his ad passion, would have married her nevertheless. Talk of a *oman's* caprices! who can estimate the lengths to which man's ind infatuation will lead him? But of Miss Wheatly—she was poor girl in a milliner's shop; neither well educated nor ac- mplished; and, worse still, the daughter of a well-known wood- wyer. I think papa paid sturdy old Sol. Wheatly a consider- le sum of money to induce him to carry his daughter and his ployment to New York. Grahame was just in the humor to llow them; but the wood-sawyer was an honest man, and a oud one in his way, and peremptorily forbid him the house, so ere the acquaintance ceased. Now you really have the whole ory; and must be content to talk of something else. What y you to listening to a scrap or two of my past experience?"

"Thank you; I will with pleasure," Laura abstractedly re- ied.

"It was of the man, who, but for the accidental discovery of

his real character, might now have been my husband, that I thought, when I spoke disparagingly of the sex that could produce such a monster of faithlessness and deceit. He it was, who taught me the bitter lesson of doubt and distrust. Before I made Harrison Ellenborough's acquaintance, I looked upon every man who wore a noble mien as the very incarnation of all that was lofty in principle and pure in morals. He was what is termed a lady's man—how I hate the very sound of the name—this Mr. Ellenborough; and the softening of his voice, the graceful deference of his whole air, whenever he was addressing a woman, had in it the most subtle species of flattery. I had been engaged to this man nearly a year; my *trosseau* was already talked about, and a part of the furniture for our future home had been bespoken, when my father—he was a proud man, but never intentionally unkind—took me into his study, and told me things about my affianced husband that made my hair stand on end—things that I would not soil my lips by repeating. More than one trusting heart had been ruined by his wiles. He was the whited sepulchre in which I had very nearly buried all my happiness for this world. I no longer loved, I despised him; but yet the breaking off of our engagement was a great shock to me; it brought about such an entire change in all my daily employments, all my plans for the future. Papa strove to force me into society for diversion; but society did me no good; it was rather a pest to me, any allusion to my changed prospects, from others, galling my pride, if it did not wound my sensibility. All my acquaintances seemed to feel it their duty to condole with me, and to denounce Mr. Ellenborough. I writhed under the infliction. I wished to forget what they seemed bent on keeping fresh in my memory.

"Then came papa's severe illness and sudden death. Mamma shut herself up in her room; refused to see any one; and gained what solace she could from opium. Grahame was abroad, in France, I believe; and thus it happened that I was thrown often into the society of the young lawyer who had the care of settling the estate. Gerald Vernet's abrupt straightforwardness of word and manner was really refreshing to me after Mr. Ellenborough's

ctitious sweetness. In my desolation his friendship was a great ·lief to me; and I fully availed myself of it. He was young ıd poor; but his talents and perseverance marked him as a sing man in his profession. I was taken entirely by surprise hen the first intimation I received of his aspiring to anything ıore than a friendly regard in my estimation, was conveyed by ı unqualified offer of heart and hand. I felt that I could have oth loved and honored the man, had it not been for that horıble demon of distrust, whispering that it was only my wealth e sought. On the spur of the moment I rejected him, with the ruel taunt of having sought me from basely mercenary motives. shall never forget his pale and rigid face, as, without a word ı self-defence, he left the room. I would gladly have been coninced that my suspicions were groundless. I was tempted to all him back; for, even then, if he would have taken a solemn ath that my doubts wronged him, I would have believed and ccepted him. I am glad I did not do this; for I have no ›nger a doubt that my decision was just.

"After that, he avoided me; and within the year, abandon-ıg the profession in which he was so well calculated to excel, he ›nnected himself with a wealthy mercantile firm in New York; ıd was by them sent out to a branch house in Bombay, where ɜ has ever since remained. I have heard that he has become a ›sitive miser, grudging himself the necessary hours for sleep, ıd the common comforts of life, in his one all-absorbing passion ·r hoarding up gold. Does not this prove that wealth was the lded bait that drew him to my side?"

"Perhaps; I cannot tell," Laura stammered, with some de-·ee of confusing; for, although her habitual sense of politeness ıd prevented her interrupting the speaker, her painfully pre-:cupied thoughts had rendered it impossible for her to follow rictly the thread of the narrative.

There was a pause of a few moments, broken by Laura's ab-ıptly asking:

"When did Miss Wheatly return to the city, and do you ıow for how long a time?"

"I do not know how long she intends remaining, permanently I presume—she came on about a month since."

"Why, then, she must have come on at about the same time that Grahame returned from New York. I wished very much to go on with him, as he was to remain but a week or ten days, but he would not hear of my going." And the face of the young wife darkened with the most painful of suspicions.

Elmeira, too, seemed strangely perturbed. Another irksome and troubled silence.

"Have you met Miss Wheatly since her arrival in town?"

Even to herself, Laura's voice sounded harsh and constrained.

"Only casually in the street; she is not a person whose acquaintance I should seek;" was Elmeira's half impatient reply. "Her beauty is merely physical, such as one woman cares very little for in another; and, as I said before, she has no high order of intelligence or refinement. How Grahame's infatuated folly can so far blind him——"

She paused abruptly, biting her lip, and studiously avoiding Laura's intensely questioning look.

"You know nothing to her discredit, Elmeira," (this with flushing cheeks and drooping eyes)—"nothing that should prevent me seeking her acquaintance, if I were so disposed."

"*You* seek her acquaintance, Laura! absurd! why should you think of such a thing?"

"To learn the charms by which she captivates. O, Elmeira! you do not know what it is to have the heart of a husband wiled away from you; for he must have loved me once, or why did he seek my hand in marriage?"

Elmeira averted her head with a heavy sigh, which Laura, absorbed in her own speculations, failed to note.

"Yes," she resumed, with anything but a dove-like gleam in her flashing eyes, "I could find it in my heart to hate this Mabel with the most rancorous hatred; and yet I would know her, and school myself to study the fascinations she has practiced to such good—to such deadly purpose."

"Do not think of such a thing," entreated Elmeira. "I will

not assist you in carrying out any such preposterous scheme, by telling you where she at present resides."

"Then you know where she lives."

"Yes; she is boarding with an old acquaintance of mine, a widow lady, once affluent but now in reduced circumstances. I would not have you go near this girl, Laura; for, although I know nothing actually to her discredit, still I do not see how she can afford to occupy a handsome suit of richly furnished rooms, when her father, who died not long since, could not have bequeathed her the means of supporting any such style of expenditure. However, the lady with whom she is boarding says she is a very quiet sort of person, receiving no visitors, but going out rather frequently to little evening parties, at a lady friend's, she thinks, but as she always admits herself with the night-key, which she insisted on having, these absences cause small trouble. But why do you look so strangely? Are you faint? Speak to me."

Laura's white lips moved as in reply, but the inarticulate murmurs escaping therefrom failed to shape themselves into words.

Elmeira untied and removed her bonnet, and leading her to a lounge, settled her comfortably back amongst its cushions; Laura obeying all her promptings with the passiveness of an overwearied child. Burning tears forced themselves from beneath her closed eye-lids, and for the first time, her tremulous lips drank in those waters bitterer than the fountains of death, which, thank Heaven! not many are required to quaff. She had never been taught to look upward to Him who grants the balm of healing to his suffering creatures; and now, in her hour of sorest need, she was as one alone in tribulation, with no one to whom she might flee for consolation.

"What could I not have borne," she asked herself, "if we, my husband and I, might have borne it together?"

The color came back to her cheeks, her quivering muscles were freshly strung, and she rose mechanically, simply saying—

"I will go home now."

With her trembling fingers, she was unable to tie on her bonnet, and Elmeira performed the good office for her.

Straight through the hall Laura took her way, not so much as pausing to bestow a word of parting on the expectant sister-in-law, who only turned back at the threshold of the vestibule.

Much the servant, who held open the door for Laura to pass, marvelled at the white and stony look of the fair young face which seemed so unfamiliar in this new guise.

Elmeira turned aside into the drawing-room, gorgeous in antique furniture, rich in carved rosewood and silkiest velvet; fine old paintings gracing the walls; and figures and groups of statuary in bronze and parian resting in niches beside the lace curtained windows, and on little shelves of ebony, supported by brackets of the lightest and most graceful designs.

Throwing herself into a Spanish arm-chair, whose flexile springs yielded to the lightest pressure of arm or shoulder, she gave herself up to the sway of thoughts that ran nearly in this wise:

"Poor Laura! it is what I foresaw—what I would have prevented if I could. And still she would hide it from me; but I see it all. The iron is entering her soul. Who, then, is happy?"

Ah, Elmeira! full many a worldly wise philosopher has sought an answer to thy query, and sought in vain.

"Yes," she mournfully continued, "De Quincey is right. 'Who, if consciously summoned, could face the hour of his birth?' Would Laura better herself by changing conditions with me? I trow not. Without hope, or aim, or end, in life; but a useless cumberer of the ground, I may well pronounce myself. I feel *sometimes* that I was made for better things than to dress, and dance, and flutter, and fade, and die. I have energies within me that might be profitably employed. But how? A noble mission has the wife and mother, in sharing the burdens of man, if she but find one worthy the name; and in rearing up a group of young immortals to fill the places of those who are passing away. But not for me those pleasing cares whose very weariness must be a joy, in comparison with the dull blank that life holds out to me. I might have found scope for my best faculties in one of the learned professions—have plead at the bar, and wreaked in burning words, on some wretched criminal, this scathing fire that is consuming my own heart—but that the stern tram-

nels of sex hold me in inexorable bonds. But woman may fill he office of physician; and what more befitting her sphere, than soothing the couch of pain and illness? I could have gone to a medical college, although it seems to me the female M. D. is held n much less honorable estimation than her male compeer. *Could ave gone;* but it is now too late. Nights of fashionable dissiation and days of languid *ennui* have vitiated the very fountains f my life. I am weak of frame, and infirm of purpose. My enebled spine craves the downiest support, and my perverted taste he most delicate cookery; not for me the hard bench and simle fare of the student. What, to others, are luxuries, are for e the merest necessaries of life: habit has made them so. What then? Although life is a weariness, death is to me an nspeakable horror; for what compensation remains, in the next fe, for those who have wasted this?"

Her startled and searching gaze wandered about the apartment, as if seeking out an answer to the question herself had sked—rested unconsciously on the costly toys littering the fancy ables; on the soft medallion carpet, with its gorgeously flowred centre and delicate bordering of lotus leaves; but not of ese she thought. Slowly, reluctantly, almost in opposition to er own power of volition, those words of mighty import, "Eteral retribution," forced themselves from her lips. Her eyes losed heavily, and her forehead contracted in an involuntary own. Bowing her head on hands which clasped each other cross the arm of the chair, she murmured audibly:

"O my Father! take pity on the miserable creature of thy ands."

Unwonted sounds these, for this gilded and decorated drawingoom to echo. For the very first time, it was consecrated by he voice of prayer.

A pull at the door-bell recalled to Elmeira the remembrance f things that were. Hastily snatching from the floor the exuisite cameo comb that had fallen from her bowed head, and aying "Not at home" to a servant in the hall, she disappeared p a back staircase.

Miserable worldlings that we are, how often do evil customs

hold us in thrall, making our very prayers rise up in stern rebuke of the petty deceptions our daily practice involves!

Not until dinner was announced did Elmeira leave her room to seek her mother, to whom she dutifully offered her arm, in descending the stairs.

Mrs. Eglistoun was strikingly like her son in personal appearance; but her still handsome face wore an unhealthy, sallow cast, and her whole air was expressive of habitual discontent. On seating herself at table, it became evident that she was by no means disinclined to find fault with most of its arrangements. A spot on her polished knife-blade attracted her immediate attention; and the offending implement was handed over to a servant, with the sharply given command that only clean knives be placed on the table for the future.

The gravies were pronounced too highly seasoned, the sauces flat and insipid; the fish was declared to be done to rags, besides being salted unbearably, and the bird-pie not half baked. To crown all, a liqueur-glass, which was certainly a little less clear than crystal should have been, was sent down to the cook with a reprimand that excited the ire of that redoubtable functionary to actual boiling point. But, notwithstanding all this fault-finding, its author ate inordinately of a variety of richly-prepared dishes, while Elmeira partook but sparingly of the plainest food at command.

Gloomily enough mother and daughter ascended to the private sitting-room of the elder lady, who threw herself into a capacious easy-chair upholstered in heavily wrought white lace, and requested Elmeira to read aloud from a newly arrived book of fashions, which she handed her, together with a golden paper-cutter.

Elmeira at once commenced reading, but in a somewhat forced and mechanical style, for her heart was not in the task.

Soon her hearer grew inattentive and restless.

"Stop, Elmeira; I really do not feel equal to the effort of listening to you just now. Ah! what a blessing is health! What would I not give to be freed from this miserable dyspepsia?"

"Excuse me, mamma, but may I tell you wherein I think ou, in a measure, bring this suffering on yourself."

"O, certainly, dear," (with a far from encouraging smile) "it ı the children, now-a-days, who instruct and guide the parents, ot the parents the children."

"I had not the remotest intention of being disrespectful or resuming," Elmeira rejoined, looking grieved and hurt. "I will ot obtrude my opinions where they are evidently not desired."

"Don't be so testy, child; but speak out, and let us hear the age counsels which I suppose I am not to be compelled to fol- ow, if they should prove too unpalatable."

In the momentary irresolution succeeding these words, so un- raciously spoken, the faintest of sighs escaped Elmeira's com- ressed lips. At another time she might have met sarcasm ith sarcasm, but to-day she was humble and subdued.

"Thank you for the permission," she said, not without a little hrill in her voice. "With your impaired health, would it not e better for you to retire early, so as to rise in time for an ight or nine-o'-clock breakfast, instead of going to bed at mid- ight and getting up at noon, as you now do?"

"Why, child, you know very well that, after our late tea, I uffer so much that it is a long time before my nerves become ufficiently composed to allow of my retiring for the night. Then, t is not until nearly morning that I fall soundly asleep; and, where one is so wretchedly wakeful through the night, one must leep in the daytime, or get no rest at all."

"Why not change our late tea hour for an earlier one, if that would agree with you better?"

"Dining so late, how could we?"

"The dinner hour might also be changed for an earlier one."

"Absurd! all sorts of vulgar persons dine early. Social dis- inctions must be maintained. Innovations once permitted, here is no saying where they would end. I verily believe that our English butler would give us warning at once if we should propose such a change to him; and we couldn't get along with- out Grillet. Besides, we should be liable to constant interrup- ions from *callers*, at any other than our accustomed hour."

hold us in thrall, making our very prayers [illegible] ie knew how of the petty deceptions our daily practi[illegible]

Not until dinner was announced [illegible] ell to remember to seek her mother, to whom s[illegible] urself to the very descending the stairs. [illegible] ."

Mrs. Eglistoun was striki[illegible] a of it. Abstemiousance; but her still hand[illegible] tion, and I will not subcast, and her whole a[illegible] rom an occasional indiges- On seating herself [illegible] ie's self."

by no means dim[illegible] ndigestion after every meal, mamma; ments. A spot [illegible] trouble with you."

diate attentio[illegible] nd one of a disagreeable fact, my dear; it is in to a servant [illegible] bad taste, I do assure you."

knives b[illegible] which pointed assurance, very distinctly enunciated,

The [illegible] Eglistoun deliberately extended her hand and took from the flat [illegible] tray a card which a servant had just brought in, and read be[illegible] the name thereon.

"Engaged, Malkins; and for a full hour to come, recollect."

This to the servant; then to her daughter: "She needn't think, this Miss Bennett, that because Miss Villers has taken her up, and my daughter-in-law acknowledges her acquaintance, that she is to be received here without more ado. Her mother was a Higgins, the merest nobody—a vest maker, or something of that sort—till she married that rich miser, Bennett, who starved himself and her to-death, and left their two children to spend what might have kept his own poor body and soul together, if he hadn't been too great a fool to use it. His daughter displays sufficient audacity, indeed, in taking the initiative in calling on a family like ours. Really, the assurance of some persons almost passes belief."

To this assertion Elmeira offered no reply; and the short pause that succeeded was broken by the elder lady, who resumed, in a tone of querulous complaint:

"Positively, this pain is becoming too severe to be endured, when there are means of alleviation within reach. Here, my dear, please to drop me out fifty drops from the phial you will find labelled 'Opium Elixir,' in the cabinet."

ma, not now," remonstrated Elmeira; "you know d you was to have recourse to opium only as a last ver take it—this he insisted on—within two , as it arrests the process of digestion, and ast remedy."

elf, pray," besought Mrs. Eglistoun, in a quor. "We will discuss this question so desire; this afternoon I decidedly unequal to the effort. Have the goodness to cene, and then I will excuse you for awhile, as I be alone. Perhaps you would like to go out for an airing; order the carriage if you desire to drive, or walk if you would prefer it."

With an air which, despite its languor, had in it much of peremptoriness, the speaker waved her daughter an imperative token of dismissal; and Elmeira, after pressing the bell-spring with her slender foot, passed from the room, sadly thinking the while:

"And there are those who envy us—my mother and myself—the daily life that we lead. Oh! if they only knew! If every living person knew the exact condition, mental and bodily, of every other person in then world, then I am almost certain, in my own mind, that there would be no such thing as envy in existence."

"How is the thermometer, Lucene?" asked Mrs. Eglistoun of the maid who had answered the summons of the bell.

"Sixty-eight, madam," was the quick reply.

"Only sixty-eight! that is not warm enough when I am shivering with the chills this pain brings on. How unfortunate that I should have had the grate taken out of this room!"

She paused thoughtfully, a few moments, then resumed:

"Tell Malkins to order a small fire in the furnace, and to open the register in the library. The moment the heat reaches seventy-five, I desire the damper to be closed that shuts off the heat from this room."

Her order was speedily executed.

"Now, Lucene, just shake up the pillows of the couch, for I

am going to lie down for an hour. That is right. Now pour me out fifty drops from the dark-colored phial you will find just inside the cabinet. How steady your hand is: you are doing it very nicely. Now, put back the phial. Keep the house as quiet as you can, and remember that no one is to be admitted. Drop the draperies over the windows. You may go: but do not be out of hearing of my bell."

CHAPTER XXXII.

EVER GOADING SUSPICIONS.

LAURA, white and still, threw herself back in a corner of the luxuriously cushioned carriage; and it was only the strained look about the fixed eyes and the compressed lips that told all was not well within.

The streets were thronged; and more than one pair of inquisitive eyes peered curiously into her face; but she heeded them no more than the passing breeze, and, in the crowd, was alone with the clashing thoughts of her burdened spirit.

She met Miss Bennett and Miss Pettigrew in an open barouche: both ladies bowed, but in her abstraction, Laura saw them not.

"What airs she does give herself, since she has married into a proud and wealthy family," said Miss Bennett, in a tone of pique.

"That she does, indeed," returned her companion, spitefully. "She'd better think of her own mother, living in real poverty, if all reports are true, and not carry her head too high."

"She is so changeable," resumed the first speaker, "all sweetness and condescension one day, and perfectly forbidding the next. But really, when it comes to giving one the cut direct in the open street, I could not have believed her capable of such insolence. Well, I am going to call at her mother-in-law's, this

afternoon, and if I am not well received there, I wash my hands of the whole family."

Before her own door the carriage drew up, but Laura, plunged in the labyrinth of her own troubled thoughts, failed to note the act of their arrival.

Twice had the footman who held open the door awaiting her issue therefrom, coughed with emphasis, before she comprehended how matters stood, and bethought herself to alight.

Dinner was already announced, when Mr. Eglistoun returned. He conducted her to a seat at table with his usual stately air; but the unwonted fire of his eye, and his cheeks' lively flush, knowing, as she did, from whose presence he had but so recently come, made Laura actually sicken with a jealousy she believed to be but too well founded.

In wonderfully good spirits was the lord of the mansion: for once he pronounced the dinner unexceptionable, and not a servant was reprimanded through its varied courses.

Laura made a show of using her knife and fork; but scarcely a morsel of food passed her lips. At last dessert was on the table; the servants withdrew; and husband and wife were left to themselves.

"Have you had a pleasant afternoon, Grahame?"

If he had not been self-absorbed, Mr. Eglistoun must have noticed the unsteady tremor of his wife's voice as she put his question; but, as it was, another engrossed his thoughts, and he was deaf, and blind to what was passing under his very eyes. So he replied carelessly:

"Exceedingly pleasant, thank you; and yourself the same, I hope."

There was a choking in Laura's throat, a rebellious swelling of the heart, which prevented her responding to this wish in words. With a firm will, she subdued every outward token of agitation, before again speaking.

"Grahame, may I ask you a simple, earnest question?"

"A score of them if you like."

"And your answers shall contain nothing but the sacred truth. *Will you promise me this?*"

"I am not accustomed to have my veracity questioned," he replied, with chilling hauteur.

"Then tell me candidly, did you ever truly love me?"

The silver knife with which he had been carving the sugared oranges in the gold-lined fruit-dish, he let fall from his hands, in his surprise and astonishment, staring in his wife's face, as if expecting to find there some traces of that mental aberation of which he evidently thought her words had given token. She did not shrink from his scrutiny, eagerly intent as she was on his expected reply.

"Absurd!" he impatiently ejaculated, as he resumed his occupation.

"Have I not, madam, anticipated your every wish?"—he was always very courtly and formal when thoroughly roused to anger. "Your very lightest wish have I not always made a point of gratifying? Have you ever known what it was to be denied any single thing which you desired, since you entered this house as its mistress?"

"One, only one," burst from her trembling lips.

"Name it."

"The heart of my husband." And Laura gave way to an uncontrolable burst of tears.

Mr. Eglistoun's brow grew dark.

"Laura, this is absolutely insufferable. Do you forget that the door is ajar; and that there are servants in the hall? Do you wish to subject me to the effects of their prying curiosity?—their vulgar gossip? Have a little consideration for *my* dignity, if you have none for your own. Tears, unless from a baby, or called forth by some weighty calamity, are utterly abhorrent to me. If you contrive to make my home unpleasant to me, you can hardly blame me, if, in time, I learn to avoid it almost wholly."

Laura dried her eyes with one last irrepressible sob, and her whole frame became rigidly upright; the cold hard lines of her pale face showing how deeply the bitterness of his words had sunk into her soul.

"I will see you in another room," she said, rising from table with the stiff, mechanical motion of an automaton.

"Excuse me, I have an engagement for the evening; and, if I had not, I should hardly covet a tête-à-tête with one in your present mood."

Paying no apparent heed to his words, she laid her hand on his arm, saying in a cold, decisive tone,

"I will see you in the library."

He had never seen her so imperative, so self-supported, before. She led the way to the room designated; and, without further objections, he followed her, making a wry face, like a person about to take a bitter potion, as she closed the door behind them.

Her tense muscles relaxed, and a shade of color came back to her cheek, as she said with a forced smile:

"I am not going to make a scene, never fear. Since I know that tears are your aversion, mine shall be shed, if at all, in private, and you shall have only pleasant looks to bask in. You shall never be driven from home, Grahame, by any unkindness or want of geniality on my part, never."

"Thank you; now you talk more like the reasonable woman I always supposed you to be. Was this all you wished to say to me?"

"No; I have a favor to ask, which I trust you will not refuse me."

"I am not used to denying you favors; but let us hear what this may be that requires so unwonted a preface."

"I wish you to bring your friend, Miss Wheatly, here, and introduce her to me, that we may enjoy her society together. I would make your friends my own, as a dutiful wife should."

His start, and the quick flush that sprang to his face, did not escape the wife's keen gaze; and her own cheek paled, in consequence.

For a moment a shade of irresolution hovered on his face, then, rising, he drew himself to his full height and emphatically uttered the single word, "Never."

Laura, too, rose, and meeting the full gaze of his eye, as briefly as he had spoken, asked, "Why?"

"She has been bred in a very different school from any you

ever knew—the hard school of adversity. Denied the advantages of education and refined culture, society would pronounce her no fitting companion for you. Artless and guileless, she knows too little of the conventionalities of polished society to be otherwise than ill at ease if subjected to its influence. Do not press me farther in this matter; I not only decline bringing her here, but I also desire that you take no steps towards forming her acquaintance."

"Then, Grahame, if you never wish me to know her, I beg and pray of you, for my sake, to give up just this one acquaintance; see, here on my bended knees, I implore it of you."

His brow was stern, and his voice harsh with anger, as he replied—

"Woman, have you well considered what you ask? Think you that when I became your husband I surrendered my own free agency, and bound myself to obey only your behests? You treat me as though I were but a boy, to be turned by a breath from my own purposes. You have yet to learn, Madam, that submission to unreasonable demands, it is not in my nature to make. The right to choose or refuse my own personal friends I do reserve, and have reserved to myself, and will never relinquish; so set your heart at rest on that point. Oblige me by exchanging that exceedingly undignified attitude for one more appropriate and becoming."

If Laura's eyes were dry when she came and sat down by her husband's side, it was because she was weeping those inward tears that write wrinkles on the brow of youth, and banish the rose from beauty's cheek. For a few moments she showed no disposition to break the silence that reigned between them.

"And so, it is that simple child, Mabel, who has caused all this commotion," said Mr. Eglistoun, in a more gentle and kindly tone; for Laura's white and stony face almost terrified him. "How did you hear of her? Who has dared to poison the heart of a wife against her own husband? Speak, that I may know on whom to visit my just wrath."

"My own eyes, none other, first told me of her; my own ears heard you call her 'Mabel.' This very day I accidentally saw

you present her with a cluster of roses, which you plucked from a bush growing on the bank where I was standing. You were riding with her, out on the Highlands, where I went to make a call, after finding that mamma was unable to accompany me to Mount Auburn. Oh, Grahame! the look—so different from any I ever received from you—which you gave her on presenting those flowers, will haunt me to my dying day."

"And this is all! Upon my honor, Laura, no one but yourself could have persuaded me that you were so suspicious in nature that a single look of friendly regard to another woman could have driven you out of your senses, in this way. You remember my telling you, not very long ago, that a jealous disposition was my special abhorrence. If I had suspected you of a tendency in that direction, with all your loveliness, I doubt if ever"——

"You would have made me your wife."

It was Laura's voice, tremulous with a new-born pathos, that concluded the sentence.

Bowing profoundly, and with an air of injured dignity, Mr. Eglistoun, without another word, left the room.

With a drooping, dejected look, Laura went up stairs, and locked herself into her dressing-room. Here she is safe from intrusion, and may give full vent to the pent-up feelings hitherto repressed. Casting back the heavy bandeaux of wavy hair from her face, she buried it in her hands, and gave way to those passionate, tearless sobs that fail to unburden the heart. But Laura is young; and youth is not easily driven to the depths of doubt and despair. A ray of light breaks in to illumine all this darkness. How possible that she was wronging her husband by unjust suspicions! Sweet possibility! welcome possibility! how sedulously she nursed and tended it! How intangible a mere look! almost the sole evidence on which she had been inclined to condemn him. What more natural than that the boyish fancy of early years should ripen, in the man, into a tender fraternal regard for its object?

"And even if her arts," thus she said to herself, "have gained an undue ascendency over him" (it was ever Mabel, rather than

her husband, whom Laura, in thought, accused of guile), "it shall be mine to reclaim—to defeat her evil machinations, and lead him back to happiness and home. Why not? I am as fair as she, and in no respect her inferior."

She rose and approached the toilette glass, and, as she surveyed her reflected form therein, the confidence in her own power to attract grew stronger in her breast.

The forehead she so critically observed was broad and white, bearing the unmistakable stamp of intellect. The large, dark eyes into which she looked, though liquid and lustrous, glowed with the fires of a keen intelligence. Her hair was glossy and abundant; a rich pink bloom was on her cheeks, and dyed the tip of her finely rounded chin. The mouth was small, with coral-red lips a little inclined to voluptuous fulness.

Of a truth, Laura, wondrously fair as thou art, few of thine own sex would envy thy luxurious surroundings. Sad is the fate of the wife who, half consciously, has yet the heart of her husband to win.

She rang for her maid.

"I wish you to arrange my hair very becomingly, Myra—braids, looped up with the diamond-headed pins, and rolls in front."

"Are we to have company this evening, or are you going out?"

"Neither, my good creature; but I have a fancy for looking well to-night, so do your very best, if you would please me."

Thus adjured, Myra performed her part to admiration; and very charmingly Laura looked, as, with restored spirits, she tripped down stairs.

Eight o'clock, their usual hour for tea, had already passed, when Popkins, Mr. Eglistoun's valet, or rather factotum; for there was nothing to which Pop, as he was familiarly designated by his fellow-servants, could not turn his hand, presented Laura with an unsealed note.

Her eager eye took in its contents at a glance. An unexpected engagement detained her husband; he might even be

absent for the night, and begged her not to remain up for him later than twelve.

"Popkins."

"What, ma'am?"

"Where was Mr. Eglistoun when he wrote this note?"

This with an air of assumed indifference, though her face glowed with shame at thus interrogating a servant.

"Why, ma'am, he was at the 'Revere,' 'long with them gentlemen that took him off a-yachting, a while ago, and I believe he means to treat 'em to a hot supper, towards wiping off old scores. Anything more, ma'am?"

"Nothing more; you may go."

"The cunning knave, I do not believe one single word he says," Laura averred to herself, as the man, with soft, cat-like pace, stole out of the room.

This was not the first time her husband had been unexpectedly detained for the night: why had it never before filled her with this disquiet, and indefinable sense of dread and oppression?—this restless longing to be assured of the actual mode in which he was spending his time?

Small justice did the French toast and delicate confectionery of the tea-table receive at her hands.

Then the old amusements somehow, for this evening, failed to amuse. She read page after page of the book she had found so deeply interesting but the previous day—yes, read and re-read them, without being able to catch so much as a tithe of their meaning.

Why must what Elmeira had said about Miss Wheatly's being out late to little evening parties force itself so pertinaciously upon her memory? A strange season for frequent parties, this! but what had that to do with her husband's absence? Nothing, of course. Absurd that the two facts should have presented themselves in such intimate connection.

Throwing down her book, she seated herself at the piano. With passionate emphasis her hand swept over the answering keys. A few brilliant and startling passages, then slower and less coherent grew the strains, until her fingers finally came to a

dead pause on the down-pressed keys, filling the room with faint, murmuring tones, which fell unheeded on her ear.

"There is no use in trying to conceal from myself that I am lonely and wretched," she assured herself, as, springing from the piano-stool, she hurried, with rapid, uneven steps, from end to end of the apartment. "It is only the unspoken sorrow that is unendurable. If I only had a friend to whisper in my ear a word of consolement! Shall I go to mamma, and tell her all? And thus add to her own burdens, which already are almost greater than she can bear? I cannot be so cruel. No; I must bear my own griefs as best I may; for there is no one to whom I can turn for consolation."

O Laura! there is One who ever stands ready to pour the balm of healing over the bruised spirit; but of Him thou neither thinkest nor knowest.

Next morning, at sound of the breakfast dressing-bell, Laura rose with languor; for she had slept but ill, even in the short snatches of sleep that had fallen to her lot, for the night. Eyes and footsteps were alike heavy as she descended to the breakfast-room. Mr. Eglistoun was not there. Popkins was summoned to her presence.

"Has not Mr. Eglistoun yet returned?"

"In course he has, ma'am; but he ain't out of his room yet, and that because he can't get out."

Laura stared at the man in bewilderment.

"What time did he return?"

"At half-past twelve, ma'am."

"Strange that I did not hear him, when I was awake until past two."

"Well, we supposed, in course, you was asleep; and so we got him up stairs, Pessle and I did, as easily as we possibly could, for fear of waking on ye up."

"Got him up stairs, Popkins! how is that?" And she turned upon the man a full glance of inquiry.

"Yes, ma'am, carried him up the best way we could, because he couldn't get up hisself, on account of the accident he met with a-coming home."

'ery trace of color forsook her face. Had he, indeed, been
g from the effects of an accident, of which she had known
while it was possible she had been wronging him by the
suspicions?

..ce, ma'am, he was a-crossing that slippery wooden pave-
..t in Tremont-street, when he tumbled down, somehow or
'nother, and sprained his ancle, the very worst way. How ever
he made out to hobble home, with the help of his cane and a
pleceman, is more'n I can tell; but he done it. The doctor
says he will most likely be laid up a week or so. That's all,
ma'am."

"Stop a moment. Can't he even come down stairs?"

"I should think not. Strikes me, the doctor said he'd best
keep his room a day or two."

"Then you may carry his breakfast up to him, on this tray;
and I will go with you, so as to pour his coffee myself."

They found Mr. Eglistoun lying on the couch in his dressing-
room.

A painful flush came to Laura's face as she remembered how she
had last parted from her husband; but she approached him with
gentlest looks, and words of kindest sympathy on her lips.

"Thank you," he rejoined, in his usual calm, even tone, "it
was an unfortunate misstep that landed me in the street, and bids
fair to mew me up in the house for a week at least. I hardly
see, with my partiality for air and sunshine, how I am to live
through such an incarceration."

"O, there are a thousand ways of passing time pleasantly,
within doors, as I shall be only too happy to prove to you,"
Laura cheerily replied.

She was as good as her word; declining all company, except-
ing such as her husband expressed a desire to see, and devoting
herself with untiring assiduity to the promotion of his comfort
and amusement.

Her rare musical talent was brought into full requisition for
his gratification; and she sang to him those difficult operatic airs
which he had calculated would produce such a sensation amongst
the more appreciative of the ten, and which has not been with-

out their share of influence in inducing the proposal that had made Laura his own.

Then, when he was in the humor for listening, she read aloud to him, by the hour together—books, papers, reviews, verbose political pamphlets; nothing came amiss to her, if it but afforded *him* pleasure.

Take it all in all, this was the happiest week of Laura's wedded experience. She had never before had her husband so entirely to herself, or felt herself so necessary to his happiness; and she more than half dreaded the day which should set the *captive prisoner* free.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

GOING TO THE ODD-FELLOWS.

A WEEK within doors, and the last day of Mr. Eglistoun's forced imprisonment had come. The afternoon was lovely. He took several turns about the library.

"You see, Laura, that I scarcely limp at all. I think I will let Pessle drive me over to the Odd-fellow's lodge, to-night, it is so long since I have been there, and I an officer too. You can spare me for one evening, can't you, puss?"

He stopped before her, looking down upon her with a kindly smile, beneath which Laura's face brightened like a drooping plant in the rays of a genial sun.

"I cannot expect to keep you with me always. Aside from the cause, I am thankful to have had you, all to myself, for a whole week." And she looked up at him with moistening eyes.

He turned abruptly away, and threw himself upon a lounge.

"Read aloud to me, Laura, please. Lazy sybarite that I am, you have quite spoiled me for reading to myself, by your admirable accent and intonation."

With pleased alacrity, Laura, seating herself on a low ottoman,

at his side, obeyed his behest. Sweetly, murmuringly, her soft, liquid voice fell on his ear, until he grew drowsy beneath its potent influence. Laura paused suddenly; for his closed eyes and deep, regular breathing proved that he was no longer a listener. Laying aside her book, without a particle of resentment at his having fallen asleep in the midst of a most charming paragraph, she sat watching his slumbers with calm, loving eyes, from which every trace of distrust had vanished.

He turned uneasily, faintly moaning in his sleep; and, with his arm, thrust back his coat from his side, thus bringing to view a small gold locket attached by a tiny chain to his watch-guard.

A smile came to Laura's lips: she believed this to be the very locket, containing a miniature daguereotype of herself, which she had presented him, shortly before their marriage.

For a long time he had not worn it; that he should have resumed the practice of so doing, seemed to her an omen of the happiest significance. Bending softly over the sleeper, she opened the tiny golden case, and turned pale as ashes. If a dagger's point had pierced her heart, it could not have throbbed with a deadlier pang. There, smiling up at her, as if in conscious triumph, was the sunny, girlish face of Mabel Wheatly. This was a double locket, and with trembling fingers she opened its other case to look upon a curl of light silky hair. Closing the locket, she dropped it, as though it had been a red-hot coal.

Bitter, thrice bitter, this second draught of distrust, pressed so closely to her lips that she may not put it aside! Her breath came and went, in hurried, feverish fashion, as she looked searchingly, and with contracted brow, straight in the face of the sleeper. Once more is she going through that sickening mental conflict of hopes and doubts that stir her spirit to its deepest depths.

"Peace, foolish doubter," whispered syren hope; "is it a crime for a man to wear the pictured face of an old-time friend, even if she do happen to be young and fair?"

"Peace thyself, false syren," then would doubt respond. "It is the picture of the woman he loves, worn secretly and guardedly, that none may see."

And, this time, doubt came off victor in the conflict.

"I will wait, *and watch*," Laura said to herself, with firmly clasped hands and determinate air. "I am resolved. The unworthy office of spy, and that over one whom I would fain love and reverence, it shall be mine to fill. I will track his footsteps, whithersoever they may lead me; and not a look or a tone shall escape me. Better certainty, whatever it may be, than this agony of suspense. Let me know the very worst I have to endure, and then I will steel myself to its endurance, if there is no remedy."

Her husband started and awoke. She rose with assumed composure.

"Excuse me, Grahame, it is time I went to dress for dinner."

"Ah, certainly;" with some little confusion of manner; "I believe I lost myself, for a moment or two—while you were reading, too; it was really inexcusable; pray pardon me."

Laura turned away with a hasty bow. "So courteous about a trifle," thought she, "when he would sink me to the earth with misery, without a word of regret or apology."

At dinner, Laura was grave, earnest and thoughtful. She spoke but little, and in her voice was that low, plaintive wail which only the burdened heart sends forth. Any one who had observed her at all must have remarked her unusual manner and total want of appetite. But there was no one, now, to be solicitous about her looks or actions, as she felt with that stinging keenness of appreciation which is born of distrust.

Mr. Eglistoun was evidently preöccupied. His whole face was lighted up with an air of seemingly pleasant expectancy, which caused Laura intensest pangs of jealousy.

"He intends seeing *her*, to-night," she assured herself; and she was actually shocked at the burning hatred that flamed up in her heart against her fair rival. Tidings of the death of the latter, would, at that instant, have given her unqualified delight. Let us not too harshly condemn her; it is only in the sharp hour of trial that we find out what manner of person we are. Instead of thanking God that we are "not as this publican," let us rather pray not to be led "into temptation."

"Take good care of yourself," said Mr. Eglistoun gaily, when about to leave his wife. "Shall I send in some of your friends to keep you company for the evening?"

"Thank you; I would rather be alone, if you please."

"Good night, then. Don't set up for me, as I shall most probably be out late, and would by no means disturb your repose on my return."

He kissed the cold cheek, which was neither offered, nor withdrawn from his salute; and went out with an eager elastic tread, not one jot of which eagerness or elasticity escaped the keen eyes which followed his every movement with unswerving purpose.

No sooner was he fairly out of her presence, than she brushed her hand across the cheek he had so carelessly saluted, with a quick gesture of resentful impatience

"If those perjured lips have taken upon themselves false vows—"

Ah, Laura! what then?—Time will show.

Now that there was no longer any occasion for putting a restraint upon herself, the unnatural tension of her muscles gave way, and she leaned feebly back in her chair, almost overcome by languor and exhaustion.

There was a ring at the outer hall door, which was opened at once by a servant; and, before Laura knew very well what she was about, she found herself extending the ordinary courtesies of reception to Miss Villers.

"Why, my dear Mrs. Eglistoun, how wretchedly you are looking, if you will pardon my saying so. Have you been out for a drive to-day?"

Laura replied in the negative, pleading a slight headache as an excuse for remaining in-doors.

"The most absurd thing you could have done, in my opinion, as there is nothing like a breath of fresh air for driving away the headache. A very charming Englishwoman, Lady Newpeer, a dear friend of mine, used invariably to order out the pony phæton, if it were for no more than a single turn about the park, in little attacks of this kind. Her ladyship was an admirable horsewoman, and could easily have managed the family chariot with four

in hand, if she had been so disposed. But where is our liege lord and master, to-night?"

"Gone to the I. O. O. F.'s," replied Laura, with a desperate assumption of gaiety.

"Charmingly fortunate; for now I shall insist on taking you along with me. I am going down Washington Street, to select a moire, brocade, or something of that kind; I like to choose an evening-dress by gas-light, and you shall give me the benefit of your taste in the selection. We are going down to Newport, for a little while, before the season is over, and I have so much shopping to do. You needn't exert yourself, in the least: I will ring for your bonnet and talma."

And so, hardly knowing whether to be glad or sorry, at this interruption to her melancholy self-communings, Laura found herself rattling noisily over the stone pavement, with only Miss Villers beside herself in the carriage.

This traveled lady amused herself in contrasting the streets, shops, and dwellings, with those of "lovely Paris," which city she pronounced infinitely superior, in every respect, to anything to be found on this side of the Atlantic.

To all this, Laura returned but monosyllabic replies.

"Why how *triste* we are," facetiously cried Miss Villers; "something must have happened to make us so unlike our common self. What is it, *m' amie*? Servants insolent; or have we quarreled with that particular 'lord of creation' whose smile is our Heaven?"

Here was a chance thrust that cut to the quick. Fierily flashed the color to Laura's before pale cheek. Haughtily she turned upon her questioner.

"I was never given to quarreling, Miss Villers; and deem your question not over complimentary," she said in tones cold and piercing as steel.

"Pardon, sweet Laura; I know you are very amiable, or I should really suspect I had made a home-thrust, you speak so sharply." And Miss Villers laughed that light, care-free laugh that jars so cruelly on the racked spirit, writhing in secret pain.

But this very laugh had the effect of restoring the self-posses-

sion Laura had momentarily lost. I am betraying myself, she thought, and that to the last person in the world of whom I would willingly make a confidante. By an effort, she threw off the abstraction in which she would so gladly have indulged, and adroitly led the conversation back to Miss Viller's residence abroad; on which congenial theme she talked volubly if not well. Their onward progress was suddenly checked by a large concourse of persons and vehicles, which proved to have collected about an omnibus which had been broken and overturned.

Into this concourse they were closely wedged, near the sidewalk, on the right side of the street.

"There is not the slightest use in trying to force one's way through a crowd like this," cried Miss Villers, settling herself back in the carriage, with an air of forced resignation. "In Paris, now, their admirable system of police regulation would render any such disagreeable detention in its prominent thoroughfares impossible. Really, this large jewelers' shop looks quite passable, by gas-light. Why, as I live, there is Mr. Eglistoun—your husband—going into the shop with a young lady on his arm. I thought you told me he had gone to the Odd-fellows."

"So I did; but he may have met with a friend on the way," Laura replied in a calm, unmoved tone.

To a close student of human nature, it might have seemed too calm and indifferent for the occasion. Much as she had desired to watch her husband, she felt not the slightest disposition to avail herself of the present opportunity for so doing; but rather became possessed of a feverish desire to have the carriage move forward on its way.

Once more Miss Villers directed her gaze through the open window of the carriage; and Laura, choking down the beatings of her own heart, nerved herself for what was to follow.

"What a lovely face," criticised Miss Villers; "so young and fair, with light, silky curls floating about it. She is sweetly dressed too; purple silk mantilla, trimmed with black Valencienness, I should think, over a white muslin dress. Positively I wouldn't allow my husband, if I had one, to be gallanting round pretty young ladies in this way. Pray tell me who she is."

"I do not know her."

"How can you tell whether you know her or not, if you do not bend forward so as to look at her? It seems to me, you take very little interest in your husband's acquaintances, while I must plead guilty to a vast deal of curiosity, about this one, at least. Shall I not send for Mr. Eglistoun, and tell him you would like to speak to him?"

"Decidedly not."

"Laconic, truly! Well, do just please lean forward and tell me who she is."

No reply. Laura's last energy had been spent in uttering that brief veto to her companion's proposal; and, if she had still preserved the power of motion, she would scarcely have exposed to Miss Villers the convulsive workings of her face, by bringing it within range of the light entering the carriage window. A little sigh of relief escaped her, as Miss Villers once more fixed her regards on the inmates of the jeweller's shop.

"There they are at the counter," she pertinaciously resumed; "but I can't make out what it is they are examining. O, I see now—a variety of bracelets. He clasps first one, then another, on her arm; a lovely arm it is too; but she has no style, no *tournure;* looking up in his face in that simple, smiling, childish sort of way. Now he has selected one of the bracelets. How strange! he is actually paying for it himself, out of that purse, blue and gold, I saw you crocheting for him. O, we are starting along, are we? I wish we had waited a minute longer, so as to have spoken to them when they came out. He seems very leisurely in his movements, considering that he is on his way to the Odd-fellows.'"

Laura could never distinctly recall what occurred during the remainder of their drive. She retained a vague remembrance of having visited several shops, and of having assented mechanically to Miss Villers' assertion that a number of dress-patterns displayed to her were "passable," a very few "lovely," and the great majority at which she looked "perfectly horrid." Also, of a kind-faced clerk who had placed her a stool on which to sit, offered her a fan, and asked her if she were faint and would

like a glass of water. This fan, in her abstraction, she had carried away with her; and, on being laughingly reminded of the "petty larceny" by Miss Villers, she had insisted on returning and paying for the article, so unconsciously purloined.

On reaching home, she ran directly up to her dressing-room, bolted the door, and threw herself into a chair, tossing her bonnet and talma upon the floor.

"Is this the sort of life I am to lead, from this time forth?" she passionately queried of herself. "Striving to deceive others as well as to impose upon myself and *him!* Outwardly calm, while I am going wild with doubts and fears! Practising the dissimulation against which my whole soul revolts! And who has driven me to this degradation? He who should have shielded me from the very breath of evil. Did I not read in his face that he was going to Mabel to-night? Why could I not, when I had so good an opportunity, have assured myself that it was really *she*, on whom he was lavishing golden trinkets? Because *her* mocking eyes made me infirm of purpose. I could not bear that *she* should gloat over my misery. But I will yet know the very worst I have to dread. I will haunt him, like his very shadow, till his hoarded secret is mine.

"Oh! Grahame! aught but this I would have forgiven thee. Through good report, and through evil report, to the world's end, I would have followed thee; and though all the world had forsaken thee, yet would not I, if thou hadst not despised and set at naught my allegiance."

A gentle tap at the door.

"Who is there?" Laura called out, almost sharply, from within.

"Only I, Myra."

"Go away then, there's a good child; I wish to be alone."

"But there has been a lady waiting to see you, almost ever since you have been gone."

"I cannot see her, or any one, to-night."

"Not even your own mother? for it is she."

A keen pang of self-reproach, that in her own selfish griefs she had forgotten the good resolutions so lately formed in her re-

rent's behalf, made Laura shrink from the coming interview, which nevertheless might not be declined.

"Tell her to come up here, Myra; no; rather say I will be down in a moment."

Laura's first glance at her mother's pale and agitated face showed her that the latter was also laboring under the influence of some painful excitement. Her first words explained all.

"O Laura, your father is half out of his senses with business perplexities; and to whom can I look, but to you, for help? I know he might go himself to Mr. Eglistoun for aid, but without your influence I feel it would be useless; for Mr. Eglistoun turns all money matters over to his man of business, and a hard man he is too, as many of your husband's poorer class of tenants know to their cost."

Laura was silent; her looks downcast and troubled.

"O, my child, it cannot be that you will turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of your own mother, in her hour of most pressing need!"

With a look of intense yearning, Laura's gaze rested on that mother's face; she was trembling with a piteous longing to pour forth her own sorrow into that sympathizing breast. Well had it been for her had she done so; but, with a firm will, and from motives of mistaken generosity, she quelled this natural impulse, and gave no sign.

"It cannot be, Laura, that you are so soon hardened by prosperity as to be indifferent to the sufferings of your own parents."

"No, mamma, ten thousand times *no;* but I am so worn-out to-night, that I can hardly think of, or resolve upon, anything—another time"——

"Another time may be too late. You do not seem to understand how critical is your father's condition. Night after night, he scarcely sleeps at all, wandering about from room to room like one distracted. My most terrible fear is, that in an evil hour he may do some violence on himself. And it is only temporary assistance that he needs, to keep him from paying the usurious rates of interest that are eating up his capital—only Mr. Eglistoun's endorsement for an amount that, to him, would be inconsiderable, to enable your father to get a note discounted

at the bank: for he has more than property enough to settle all demands against him, if it is not forced upon a dull market."

"O, mamma! what a world of suffering it is," murmured Laura, a look of hopeless despondency settling on her face.

Was this to be her sole reply to her mother's distinct and earnest appeal to her filial gratitude?

Mrs. Avondale rose with an air of subdued dignity. She was deeply wounded that her daughter should manifest so little interest in her parents' trials.

"I think you must have sat up late last night, Laura; for you are pale and languid, and I will try and think it is *that* which prevents your clearly understanding what I have been telling you. I go away with a heavier heart than I brought here."

There was coldness in the heart of the mother toward her only child, as she left the splendid mansion of which that child was nominal mistress. How would all her feelings have changed, could she have seen Laura, safely intrenched behind the locked door of her own dressing-room, wringing her hands in speechless grief, not many minutes after her own departure! or, later still, crying aloud that it needed not this added drop of bitterness to make her full cup overflow.

"How could I crave favors of *him* for me or mine? of one who has so cruelly wronged me? who committed perjury when, in the sight of God and man, he promised to love and cherish me while life lasted. Can this be so? I must, oh! I *must* get out of this horrible suspense, and then I shall be at peace—perhaps only such peace as falls to the lot of the wretched. Better even that, than this torturing uncertainty. But can I, ought I, to ask of *him* the boon my mother craves? The words would choke me; besides, I am almost sure they would be of no avail. He already knows all the straits to which they have been reduced; and yet he has never raised a helping hand in their behalf. Selfish is he—Heaven forgive me if I do him injustice—to the heart's core. Abundant means has he to squander on his own pleasures, but nothing for the relief of the unfortunate. How long I tried not to believe this! but every day, sorely against my own will, more clearly proves it to be true."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DARING RESOLVE, DARINGLY EXECUTED.

On the day succeeding the events recounted in the last chapter, Mr. Eglistoun had some bachelor friends to dine with him.

With the most gracious urbanity of manner, Laura discharged the duties of hostess. Proud of her beauty and accomplishments, Mr. Eglistoun was seemingly the most happy and devoted of husbands; and more than one of his guests actually envied him the rare domestic felicity that had apparently fallen to his lot.

It was only when alone, that the mask of cheerfulness dropped from her face, and the tired *actress* gave way to the gloom that oppressed her.

A night of troublous unrest, on her part, was succeeded by one of those raw, gusty days heralding the near approach of autumn.

"Let us have tea half an hour earlier than common, if you please, as I have an engagement for the evening," carelessly requested Mr. Eglistoun. Adding—"I am really sorry to be obliged to leave you so much by yourself. Shall I not send for Elmeira to be company for you while I am out?"

"Hypocrite!" This to herself, then aloud—"Thank you; I am not feeling quite well to-night, and would rather remain by myself."

"As you please. I would advise you to retire early. Do not think of troubling yourself to remain up for me, as I may be out quite late; these New York friends of mine keep such bad hours."

After tea he gaily took leave of her, without a suspicion of the fiery emotions raging in her soul.

"Myra—here—quick!"

In the sharp, decisive tones of suppressed excitement, Laura spoke.

"What can I do for you, madam?"

"Your long cloth cloak and brown silk bonnet, I wish to borrow them; I am going out."

"Alone, this dark evening! O, Mrs. Eglistoun!"

"Hush! where are they?—the cloak and bonnet, I mean."

"O, madam!—they're so shabby—they aren't fit for a lady like you——"

"Not another word, girl!—just tell me where they are."

"Down stairs, in the back-hall closet; but if you must go, let me go with you: I'm not timid, and I should be some protection."

Laura only paused to shake her head in reply to this proposal, before darting down stairs; and, after hastily robing herself in the outer habiliments of her maid, she hurried down a back staircase, and thence made her way to an arched passage, leading to the street.

Here she paused, for a moment, in an attitude of listening expectancy.

Her cheeks burnt painfully, and her heart beat so heavily that she could hear its labored throbbings.

Can it be possible that her husband has already left the house? No; that is he, descending the steps—that, his firm, elastic tread on the side-walk.

Laura emerges from her gloomy hiding-place, and at a safe distance follows him, with stealthy but determined pace. Once or twice she had nearly lost him in the crowd of pedestrians thronging the sidewalk, but with a thrill of strange satisfaction, had again caught sight of his tall, well-knit figure, as he passed a street lamp, or crossed a flagging. With greater ease she kept him in view, when, forsaking the more crowded thoroughfares, he entered a quiet, genteel street, whose lighted basements showed her the white Kossuth hat, crowning dark-brown curls, which served as a beacon to guide her onward steps.

Suddenly Mr. Eglistoun paused, and looked about him. Laura shrank more closely into the shadow, and watched him with keen, dilated eyes. Raising his fingers to his lips, he blew one of those low, peculiar calls with which school-boys sometimes summon each other to their sports. She heard a window in the second story of the house near which he stood softly closing; then he turned on his heel, slowly retracing his steps, and it was

only by plunging into a dark alley-way that she avoided meeting him face to face.

Again her heart throbbed almost to suffocation. A moment more, and she became aware that he had again turned, and that his steps were receding from her. She sprang out upon the side-walk, just in time to see a light girlish figure, clad in dark mourning garments, tripping down the steps of one of the houses. Laura could not make out objects very distinctly, but was sure that her husband almost immediately joined this darkly draped figure.

"New York friends, indeed!" was her indignant ejaculation, as she shrank back within her hiding-place, listening intently.

"Mabel;" yes, that was the name by which her husband addressed his companion, as they passed, in close and eager converse, within a few paces of her place of concealment.

It was not difficult to follow the two, unperceived, as they evidently chose the least frequented streets for their walk; and were, besides, so much occupied with each other, as to pay little heed to what was passing about them.

Laura was not far behind them, when they ascended the steps of a house whose basement and hall were wholly unlighted.

With an intensity of gaze that nothing could escape, she noticed that, instead of ringing the bell, her husband raised his cane and executed therewith a sharp double knock.

The door opened suspiciously, but a few inches; he spoke a single word, in what seemed to her a peremptory tone, and, with his companion, was instantly admitted. Laura was half mad with excitement. An unnatural strength and audacity took possession of her. A fierce glittering light was in her eyes, as she resolutely ascended the steps, muttering to herself:

"Where *he* goes I have a right to go. I have not risked so much to be defeated now. I will dare and brave anything but I will know."

Taking a heavy gold buckle from her belt, she imitated, as nearly as she was able, the double knock given by her husband.

A heavy bolt was drawn back inside; the door opened a

hand's breadth; and she *felt* a pair of eyes peering at her from the inside darkness.

"Who is it? Jessie or Kit?"

She could not see the speaker, but the voice was villainous.

"Jessie," she answered at random; for she had reached that exalted pitch of excitement at which one scruples at nothing, and when it seems as though some blind invisible fate was goading one on, one knows not whither.

"The pass-word, my beauty—be quick about it."

Here was a difficulty Laura had not anticipated. She saw herself foiled on the very threshold of success.

"Tell Mr. Eglistoun I wish to speak with him," she said, at a venture, scarcely yet knowing what course she would pursue if her command were obeyed.

"There ain't no such person here," was the surly reply.

"Then Mabel Wheatly."

"Never heard the name afore; and if you know when you're well off, you'll jest tramp." And the door was closed in her face, and the heavy bolt driven sharply into its socket inside.

What was to be done now? Laura was not at all inclined to take the advice just bestowed on her, although, under the circumstances, was probably the best that could have been given her; and, without any definite purpose, began pacing slowly back and forth in front of the house to which she had been denied admission. She was just in that distracted frame of mind which gives one a desperate energy of execution, but scarcely leaves one capable of connected thought. An overpowering desire of ascertaining how her husband was employed deadened every other impulse within her.

Startled by the heavy tramp of approaching footsteps, she had sense enough to crouch down in the shadow of the granite steps, leading to the house. She found it much easier to act on the spur of the moment than to plan any definite course of action.

A man, with what she took to be a champagne basket in his arms, entered the back passage of the very house whose doors were closed against herself. She heard his resounding double knock at the gate; and, after making sure of his admission, fol-

lowed him with guarded steps. The gate was ajar; and cautiously entering the yard, she hastily concealed herself beneath the stairs leading to the top of the shed, behind the dirt and swill-barrels. Not an instant too soon was this effected; for the next moment a vile-looking man—author of the villainous voice that had addressed her at the front door—came grumbling into the yard.

For the first time Laura's spirit quailed within her. She could see, by the light in the room whence this man emerged, that his face and air were characterized by an expression of the most revolting brutality. A deep scar furrowed his narrow, receding brow; and one of his eyes was blackened and closed, as by a severe blow.

"Here, you, Nance," he savagely growled; "is this the sort of care you take of things? leaving gates open for the first long-eared eaves-dropper that wants to git a living, minding other folk's business to poke his head into. I say, Bill, did ye see anything of a queer-acting woman prowling about the premises, as ye come along?"

"I didn't see nobody," replied he of the basket, from within, where he stood talking with an untidy looking woman, who was rinsing wine-glasses in a dish-tub.

"Ye didn't, hey?" rejoined he of the black eye. "Wal, she was a queer one as I've seen, this many a day. A spy, like as not; if I'd ha' r'aly thought so, I'd as soon have punched her head for her, as I'd mash one of them rascally rats that's always trying to gnaw the house down about our ears. Come, Bill, enough of your soft sawder for this time; you're a hindering Nance with her dishes, and you'd best be budging along."

Thus admonished, the bearer of the basket thought proper to take his departure. The gate was bolted after him; and the one-eyed Cerberus who seemed to guard the place retreated into the room whence he had issued.

Laura's heart, which had almost stood still with fear, now beat in strong, tumultuous bounds. She endeavored to change her crouching attitude for one more comfortable, but the rustling of her silken robe warned her not to repeat the experiment.

Through the uncurtained window, she could still see the brawny form of him whose words had caused her so much terror; and the clink of the glasses that Nance was washing still came to her ear. The near vicinity of one of her own sex was not without its influence in restoring to Laura a certain sense of security. She further strove to reassure herself by reflecting that her husband was in the house, and that in the event of any real danger occurring to herself, a cry would summon him to her aid.

After a time, the object of her special dread rose from the window, beside which he had been sitting, and she heard his footsteps passing through the adjoining room. Nance soon followed, carrying the light and a tray of glasses, and that portion of the house was left to silence and to darkness.

Laura rose, and stretched her cramped limbs; then cautiously ventured forth from her place of concealment, at first with a determination to effect her escape, and next with a resolve to more closely scan the place than she had yet found opportunity for doing. Thus she became aware that, although the lower story was in utter darkness, a window on the second floor was streaming with light; and, as the lower sash was hardly closed, she could hear the sound of voices and of laughter issuing from the room. Might not this gay mingling of voices betoken a social gathering in some private family of worth and respectability? she asked herself.

Why then all this mystery?—The pass-word, and the grim porter talking so vindictively of spies?

A possible means of reducing her doubts to certainties presents itself. Turning up her silk robe and pinning it about her waist, to prevent its rustling, she slowly, and with great caution, crept up the steps leading to the top of the shed. The window shade was not drawn fully down; and, partly screening herself behind a tall post used for fastening up clothes-lines, she managed to obtain a partial glimpse of the room inside. It was a large and showily, rather than tastefully, furnished apartment, in the centre of which stood a marble-topped table, covered with bottles, decanters, goblets, wine-glasses and champagnes.

From the sound of voices, she judged that there must be quite

a number of persons, of both sexes, inside; but she failed to catch a distinct view of the inmates of the room. For a considerable time, she listened, with breathless intensity, to the various speakers, if haply, [or *unhaply*] she might detect the voice of her husband amongst them. This she failed to do.

Moving a little farther along, behind the railing that edged the shed-top, and still maintaining a bent and crouching posture, she succeeded in gaining a clearer view than she had yet obtained of the room inside.

On a tête-à-tête, near the window, sat a fast looking young man, attired in the extreme of the mode. A glass of wine was in one hand, while his disengaged arm encircled the waist of a bold-faced young woman, one of whose uncovered shoulders reclined against his own, with a freedom of familiarity that made Laura sicken with disgust.

"*He* certainly is not there," she decisively assured herself. "He must be in some other part of the house; for, with his habits of refined reserve, he could never have tolerated any such open exhibitions of gross familiarity."

It was enough. Her curiosity sated, she now thought only of escape. Down the stairs she crept, with cautious care, as she had ascended.

Her hand was already on the fastening of the gate, when the basement window was suddenly raised, and a surly voice cried out—

"Who the d—l is afoul o' that gate? Off with ye, if ye don't want to be wiped down with a good oak towel."

The speaker evidently thought himself addressing some would-be intruder outside the gate, but notwithstanding this, Laura stood transfixed. This frightful, black-eyed Cerberus was so near that he might have clutched her shoulder, by stretching forth his arm from the window. A horrid creeping sensation ran over her flesh, and spent itself at the roots of her hair. A terrible faintness nearly overpowered her; she strove against it with the whole force of her being; and succeeded in preserving her attitude erect and motionless. If the man at the window had brought a *light* with him, she must inevitably have been discovered; as

it was, her dark cloak and bonnet favored her concealment; and drawing the blinds together, the argus-eyed porter departed for the front of the house, without having become aware that there was a trespasser within his gates.

Then, with a great sob of relief, Laura sank to the earth. But, although her strength had deserted her, leaving her weak as an infant, she had still sense enough to feel that, by remaining where she was, she ran the greatest risk of detection, if any one should happen to come in or go out, by the back way. Exerting herself to the utmost, she crawled round to her former hiding place, where her daintily embroidered under-skirts were soiled by contact with the damp and filthy brick pavement. Comparatively secure, she gradually regained calmness and strength. All was so still in the lower story of the house, that she once more ventured forth.

Little by little, she noiselessly worked the ponderous bolt from its socket, and fled out into the street. The clock of the "Old South" was just peeling forth the hour; it was eleven.

She has escaped! Yes; but out, alone and unprotected, at such an hour of the night as this, surely the wife of Grahame Eglistoun, Esq., can hardly yet exult in the idea of present safety. She feels that being arrested as a vagrant, and sent to the lock-up for the night, would be no inapt termination to the evening's rash adventures. Fortunately she discovered a good-natured hostler, just locking the doors of his stable, and, by the offer of a liberal reward, induced him to get out a carriage and take her home.

For the first time, she dreaded to ring her own bell, and expose herself to her own servants. While standing on the steps, hesitating how to act, the door-knob was softly turned, and Myra admitted her into the vestibule.

"I was watching for you from the chamber window," whispered her maid, "and I am so glad you are safely back! May I not take your bonnet and cloak? for you will be likely to meet some of the others in the hall, and they know I never come in at the front door."

"You are the best creature in the world," responded Laura,

as her maid removed her outer garments, and effected a hasty retreat therewith.

She found cause to rejoice in the wise forethought of her trusty attendant, as, in crossing the hall, through a glass door at its farther end, she caught the eye of Popkins peering at her over the baluster of a back staircase he was just descending. Carelessly beckoning him to her side, she inquired, in a tone of the utmost indifference, if Mr. Eglistoun had returned, and having received a negative reply, passed on.

Her first emotion, on reaching her own room, was one of sincere thankfulness that she was once more in a place of safety; but this speedily gave place to such a sinking of the spirit as she had not yet known.

Had comparative certainty brought the peace she had coveted? On the contrary, she felt as though she would never know peace any more on earth.

What had the future to offer her? What but despair?

How different the world from what it had been, but one short month before!

Why had she so pertinaciously pursued a knowledge, which, found, could but turn her life to a dreary waste? Oh! had she been but content to remain in ignorance! Then, in her husband's frequent absences from home, this tormenting image of the man she had vowed to love and honor taking another to his heart would not so constantly have obtruded itself upon her tortured fancy.

Why must she have met Mabel, in the first place? and why, since then, must circumstances have all concurred to prove herself a wronged and slighted wife? Oh! that she had never seen Mabel Wheatly—that *she* had died in place of her father!

"Murderess—at heart, a murderess!"

She recoiled at the stern accusing voice of conscience. Her head throbbed violently, after all the excitement and agitation of the evening. She bent her brow upon her hands with a low, shivering sob, as the pendula on the mantel pointed to half-past twelve.

There was a tap at her door. She raised her head with a

gesture of impatience, but did not speak. The door was pushed ajar, and it was Myra who requested permission to enter.

"Shall I take down your hair, Mrs. Eglistoun, if you are ready to retire?"

"Ah, yes; I had forgotten: I did not think how late I was keeping you up, poor child."

"O, it's no matter about *me;* but you are looking so pale. Are you well yourself?"

"I have a severe headache."

"I thought as much. Please let me take off your dress, and then I can bathe your head and brush your hair more conveniently."

"You are very kind, my good creature, and—Myra—I never, in all my life, needed kindness so much as now."

No response. The fact was, this lank, ill-favored maiden had one of the warmest hearts that ever beat in human breast; and she had enough to do, without speaking, in wiping away the furtive tears that stole over her face, while busying herself, with tender hands, in disrobing her mistress.

Poor Myra! without seeking explanations or obtruding annoying questions, she gave all she had to give, in the unspoken sympathy, by which, for the time, Laura was soothed and consoled. But when again left to herself, the very blackness of desolation seemed to encompass her, and not a ray of comfort was left to lighten the gloomy future. Sleep, rest, and quiet, were alike out of the question. Tossing aside the snowy counterpane, she sprang from the bed, and thrusting her feet into a pair of embroidered dressing slippers, hurried, with quick, sharp tread, from end to end of the room. The feeble light from the small waxen taper annoyed her; and she placed it behind a screen in a corner of the chamber.

Her whole face was convulsed by the indescribable emotions that held her as their prey. Only an occasional word burst from her firmly compressed lips.

"Deserted—unloved—alone."

It was past four in the morning, when her strained and listening ear caught sound of a slight commotion in the hall below, as

of some one newly arrived. Starting up, she threw a shawl over her linen night-dress.

"It is he; I will see him at once. It may be that when he sees he is killing me, he will even yet relent. I will implore him, once again, to take away this bitter cup that he is pressing to my lips. For the last time, I will offer to forget and forgive the past, if he will only make the future atone for it—only come back to me."

She opened the door, but paused on the threshold as the sound of voices came up to her from the hall below, together with that of a heavy, shuffling tread, as unlike as possible her husband's usually firm, elastic step. But he it was, reeling in his gait, and assisted up stairs by the ubiquitous Popkins. On reaching the landing, the master suddenly made a futile attempt to pass his arm about the neck of his servant, querying, in accents of maudlin tenderness:

"Mabel, my angel, why so coy?"

The heart of the wife sickened, almost died, within her, as she retreated into her room, no longer desiring an interview with one whom she had never before seen thus degraded.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SILKEN BONDS CHANGED TO FETTERS OF IRON.

For a time after retreating to her room, the very excess of Laura's emotion kept her immovable as a statue. But soon she shook off the attitude of drooping dejection she had unconsciously assumed, and roused herself to the task of fresh resolves.

"No," she inwardly averred, "I will never again kneel to him in abject entreaty for the love that is my right, and which he so freely lavishes on another. Have I not implored him, once, to give up *her* acquaintance?—and did he not deny me harshly—inexorably? Well, he has made choice between us,—Mabel and *me*,—let that choice be final. He is cold and stern: one might

as well dash one's self against a rock as try to move him. But this life!—this dying daily deaths!—I cannot, and will not, bear it. The air of this house poisons me: its moral atmosphere is stifling to me. I shall die if I remain. I will *not* die for him: he is not worthy of the sacrifice.

"O, if I could but be as I was in my father's house! If I could but rid myself of his perjured name, and be plain Laura Avondale once more! A divorce!—dragged before a court of justice!—the proceedings commented on by a curious wonder-loving public; duly chronicled in the daily prints, and my name, in the mouths of news-boys; familiarly bandied about the streets. Horrible! But I have done no wrong; why then shrink from this publicity of degradation?

"But, even if I could bring myself to submit to all this, going to law is very expensive; where is my private fortune? Where my means of carrying on a legal prosecution against my sole legal protector?" She sighed heavily, and again reiterated:

"I cannot remain here; I *will* not; but where am I to go? and will he consent to be made the theme of public comment by permitting me to go at all? Can he force me to remain? Perhaps so. No one knows aught against him but myself, and I am almost sure that the law does not permit a wife to testify against her own husband. Besides, what, to me is 'confirmation strong as holy writ,' might have small weight with a jury."

With contracted brows, she pondered deeply; ever arriving at the same conclusion that she could not, and would not, remain to endure the life she had lately led.

The thought of returning to her father's presented itself to her; but she shrank from the idea of becoming a burden upon one already harassed to the very brink of despair, by business perplexities.

"But, although separating from him, have I not a legal claim on my husband for a maintenance? I suppose so, unless he should see fit to have inserted one of those intensely vulgar advertisements one sometimes sees in the papers:—'Deserted my bed and board; and all persons are forbidden, from this time forth, to harbor or trust said —— on my account.'

"With my name to round the period, what a delicious morsel of gossip such a notice would form for scandal-loving fashionables. How will prim elderly maidens affect to congratulate themselves that they never braved the perils of matrimony; and point me out as a warning beacon to the unwary. Ha, ha." She laughed hysterically, and ended with a passionate burst of weeping.

"Why do I thus play with the weapon that is slaying me?"

She shivered with the cold; for the night, or rather the morning air, was growing damp and chill. It was rather a relief than otherwise, this sense of physical discomfort—this counter irritant to the aching mind. She would not so much as stretch out her arm for the shawl that hung over the arm of the couch on which she rested.

Calmer she grew; and gradually the light of a fixed purpose dawned on her face. Her own unspoken words will best give an idea of what that purpose was. Thus they ran:—

"There is wanting but one link to complete the chain of evidence against him. That, I will endeavor to search out, to-morrow. Then I will tell him all, and quietly leave him, asking nothing but freedom from the bonds and shackles that make me his unwilling slave. My own friends shall know the truth; to his, let me be as one dead, I care not. If my father gives up to his creditors all that he has, can they ask more? Let them but leave him enough to defray our expenses to some distant city, and I will be content. Together we will go—my father and mother and I—and I will support all three. They say occupation is the best medicine for a sick heart; so, perhaps it will be as well that I should be obliged to exert myself to gain a livelihood. It will, at least, prevent me sinking into the torpor of despair. I will turn my musical talents to account. I can give lessons on the piano, fill the place of organist in some church, or even assist at a concert. Neither papa or mamma are naturally extravagant in their habits; and as for me, I think luxurious surroundings will henceforth be hateful to me, from hateful associations."

Viewed in all lights, this project seemed the most dignified and feasible that had yet occurred to her.

Dawn was already streaking the East, when Laura once more

sought her pillow, and soon fell into the deep, dreamless slumber of utter exhaustion. When she awoke, the sunlight was streaming into the room. Myra had already been in, and partially unclosed the upper half of the shutters, so that Laura could look forth and see that the sky was serenely clear, the morning lovely. Everything looked so cheerful, that a half smile came to her lips, but speedily vanished as the memory of her great sorrow flashed upon her.

It was nine o'clock when she went down to the breakfast-table, more from the hope of meeting her husband there, than from any desire for food. Instead of Mr. Eglistoun, came Popkins with apologies for the non-appearance of the former, who had a bad headache, and wished a cup of coffee sent up to him.

"Tell Mr. Eglistoun, I wish particularly to speak with him before he goes out."

"I will be sure and remember your message, ma'am." And the low-voiced, keen-eyed menial withdrew.

For an hour and a half Laura waited in the library, in momentary expectation of her husband's descent; then rang for Myra, and inquired if he had gone out."

Myra did not know, but hastened in search of Popkins to ascertain, and quickly returned with information that he had gone out, Pessle believed to the post-office, and that no one had seen Mr. Eglistoun leave the house.

After this, Laura fidgetted about the library, for a while, in restless, unquiet fashion.

"I will go up and see for myself," she said, at last; "why not? But not thus—not trembling and agitated, but calm and collected—a tender wife, solicitous for her husband's welfare, anxious for his lightest ailment. O, I could despise myself for this part I am acting. Only one day more will I stoop to play the hypocrite, to personate the odious character of household spy. Thereafter I will spurn meanness, deception, and every sort of guile, in myself as in others."

With a firm step she ascended the stairs, and tapped lightly at the door of her husband's dressing-room.

No one replied to the summons. Turning the latch, she softly

entered the room. It was empty. Approaching the door of his chamber, she saw that he was still in bed, soundly sleeping.

She was about to leave the room noiselessly as she had entered it, when her eye accidentally fell on an open escritoire, with papers and envelopes scattered loosely about, inside. *Her* letters might be here treasured up. With trembling haste Laura unfolded note after note, merely glancing at its signature and replacing it.

Here is a daintily folded missive, with a little bunch of withered forget-me-nots fastened to it with a faded blue ribbon. Opening it, a ring of jet-black hair fell out.

It was dated "Paris," and had been written several years previously, at a time when Laura knew Mr. Eglistoun had been abroad. She only paused to read the closing sentence, which was as follows:

"Sans adieu, doux ami, que j'aime mieux que ma vie. Comptez à jamais, Monsieur, sur le plus tendre attachement de votre très-dévouée

"CLOTILDE."

With gleaming eyes and hushed breath, Laura devoured these words of tender endearment, murmuring, as she returned the note to its former resting place:

"What! still another! now I can believe all that Elmeira told me of the false and fickle sex."

Leaving her husband's papers as she had found them, she noiselessly quitted the room.

At the luncheon-table Mr. Eglistoun first made his appearance. Dignified, polished, impassive as ever, Laura looked at him with a vague feeling of apprehension throbbing at her heart. Was it possible to escape from him, if he should will otherwise? In his absence, she had been full of energy and resolution; his presence chilled, almost benumbed her. The silence became oppressive. She made inquiry as to his head-ache, and received the concise reply, "Rather better."

How coldly indifferent his tone and manner, compared with

what they had been in addressing Mabel! This thought nerved her courage afresh.

"Have you any engagements for this afternoon, Grahame?"

"None that I think of, now."

"Then, perhaps you will not object to going with me to Madam Lerault's, as soon as lunch is over. You know, you detested my summer bonnet; and as it is rather thin for early fall, you shall go with me, if you will, and select something you would like to see me wear."

"Very well, if you desire it; but you may be assured that, if I choose for you, it will be nothing common, or cheap-looking—no flashy colors, dangling bugles, or anything of that sort."

He would have spoken in precisely the same tone if he had been ordering a new frame for one of his fine old paintings.

Their drive together was a silent one, neither husband nor wife inclining to be conversable. He gave himself up to listless musings, while Laura struggled to preserve an appearance of composure she was far from experiencing. He did not appear to observe that she gave the coachman some directions as to the course he was to take, which resulted in their turning off the more crowded thoroughfare into narrower, more quiet streets. Thus far, her scheme had worked admirably. Her heart gave a great bound as they turned down the very street from which she had fled in terror, the previous night. There was the very house she had seen her husband enter with Mabel Wheatly—its blinds now all closely shut—no signs of occupancy about the premises. Laura commanded herself by a strong effort.

"Will you please to tell me, Grahame, who lives in that house?"

Mr. Eglistoun slightly started, his cheek certainly reddening.

"In that house? How should I know? Why do you ask?"

"Because I once saw you go into it, and wondered what friends *you* could have in a narrow, back street like this."

"Psha! A man may go into a house without having friends in it, I suppose. But seriously, Laura, I make it my express desire that you will never hereafter mention that place, either to

myself or any other person. I hold mortgages on a great deal of city property, and it is not *my* office to inquire too closely into the character of all my tenants, as long as my agent finds no difficulty in collecting his dues. I may even, in the way of business, you understand, have been compelled to go into a house whose reputation is that of a place a lady should blush to so much as mention. You see, therefore——"

But Laura saw nothing. There was a confused rumbling sound in her ears; the carriage seemed spinning down some frightful vortex with fearful velocity; she clutched at she knew not what for support, and fell fainting in her husband's arms.

"Home—quick!" he cried, as, ever mindful of appearances, he drew the curtains over the carriage windows, to shut out the gaze of too curious eyes.

Not until laid on a lounge in the library, did Laura fully regain consciousness. With difficulty she raised herself to a sitting attitude.

"Grahame, I wish to—to have a long talk with you—and—to explain—why it was——"

"Time enough to say what you wish, when you are a little stronger: I am not going out before dinner," said Mr. Eglistoun, not unkindly. Adding:

"Were you always delicate, Laura; and subject to sudden fainting fits?"

"Only when suffering severely," she, with truth, replied.

A moment later, Popkins, unseen by Laura, beckoned his master out into the hall. He was absent but a minute or two, before returning to the library, and then his face was pale and agitated.

"Sudden and bad news unexpectedly calls me away, Laura; I will be back as soon as possible. Allow me to advise that you see no one in my absence."

He hurried away.

"Mabel may be ill," thought Laura, with bitterness. "What are *my* claims to hers?"

She rose and crept up stairs, steadying herself by the baluster as she went.

It is too hard ; I cannot bear it longer alone ; I will go to
ma," she murmured, throwing herself upon the couch in her
ing-room.
Myra, will you bathe my head in cologne-water ?"
stantly her request was complied with.
Thank you, Myra ; I feel already better. You have been
ys kind and faithful to me. I wish I could take you with

Surely, madam, you are not thinking of going away, and you
iserably ill."
Yes, Myra, I am going home, for I cannot tell how long ;
I want you to pack my trunks directly. Go, now, and ask
of the men to bring them in here—the two traveling trunks—
e bearing my initials."
ery reluctantly Myra departed to execute her unwelcome
nission, not having courage to set up any argument in oppo-
n to the express commands of her young mistress.
I was half tempted to tell her all," Laura murmured to her-
" but it is better as it is : she might have lost her place.
: thing ! what place will she have to fill, when I am gone ?
ant to have told *him* all ; but my strength failed me : it may
l for the best : he might have opposed my going, and I am
veak to encounter much opposition now. I will write him
r particular, that he may see I knew what just cause I had
eserting him."
Only my common dresses, Myra," said Laura to the maid,
stood beside the trunks awaiting orders. " Stop ; I will
and select them myself. Here, you may fold these white-
pers, the cambric and challis morning dresses, the cashmeres
plainer silks. The brocades and party dresses I shall not
. Wait a moment, fitting myself, they will be of no use
and the rich lace with which they are flounced can be sold :
st learn to look out for my own interest now, for there is
ne else to do it for me."
erved to activity by the strong purpose inspiring her, her
s worked diligently at the process of packing, although her
ly set features were pale as ashes.

"This camel's-hair scarf and these shawls were mine when I was single; put them all in, Myra."

She took up the casket of pearls, held it with a momentary irresolution in her hand, then placed it one of the trunks.

"Yes, I think I may take this without wrong; for it was a free offering before he had any legal claim on me or mine."

She was nearly overpowered by recollections of the past—the bright and happy past, whose brightness she now felt had had small foundation, save in the hues of her own fancy. She leaned on Myra's shoulder for support.

"Only a momentary weakness," she said; "now it is over; go and tell Pessle to bring the carriage round to the door: I will be all ready to start by the time it is there."

Myra left the room. Laura was taking her bonnet from its box, when a quick, firm tread on the stairs paralyzed her movements.

The door-knob turned, and Mr. Eglistoun, somewhat paler than usual, stood before her. He seemed to remark nothing noticeable in the room, with its ready packed trunks, as, laying a hand impressively on her shoulder, he looked searchingly in her face. Beneath this fixed glance Laura quailed; for sleeplessness, excitement, and the fever of an unshared purpose, had made her weak.

"They have not told you, then?"

"Told me!—of what?"

"Of this great trial that has come to you—to us."

"They have told me nothing—what is it?"

He made no reply. The expression of her face made him fear to proceed.

"I can't bear much more," she murmured with piteous helplessness.

"Much more!" the bewildered husband repeated after her; then looking at the convulsive workings of her white face, his tones softened to those of real pity and solicitude as he added:

"Perhaps you had better not be told the sad tidings to-day. Lie down and be quiet, now. In the morning, after a good

ght's rest, you will be better able to bear what I have to tell ›u."

"No; I can't rest, I cannot be quiet, *here*. Oh! Grahame, ›u know that you have cruelly wronged me; and it is death to ɜ to stay here and watch your face and see it light up, as it ›es, at thought of going to Mabel Wheatly—for you *do* go to ›r: it was no longer ago than last night that I saw you, with y own eyes—I would not condemn you on any other evidence ·go with her into the very house you this day told me a lady ould blush to so much as mention."

A heavy flush came to Mr. Eglistoun's cheek.

"I have never yet, madam, spoken to you the first angry ord; but, by Heaven! you will drive me to it, if you so far rget your dignity as to dog my steps, and turn my house into hell upon earth with your insane jealousy, if you do not go ill farther and expose us both to the humiliation of public andal."

Laura felt her whole being boiling over with indignant pas-on at this unjust censure.

"I will not remain," she averred, in a low tone of concen-ated vehemence, "to trouble your name or your house: I should › mad if I did. I resign your name. I will be to you as one ›ad. I will flee—anywhere—to the very gates of death, sooner ›an cross your path. I'd rather beg my bread in the streets ›an find shelter under *your* roof. My trunks are packed—if ›u will not give me my clothes, I will leave them—but this ›ry hour I am going home to my father's."

"Impossible; you cannot go."

"*I will.*"

Sharp and piercing were the whispered words. She sprang ut upon the landing, and was nearly down stairs, when Mr. ›glistoun called over the balûster:

"Stop her, Popkins; she is frantic with the news, and must ot reach the street."

Another instant, and a strong arm stayed her flight. Toge-her, master and man bore her back to her room.

Conducting her to the couch, Mr. Eglistoun, having first dismissed Popkins, locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

"Would you be my jailer?" Laura asked, rising and confronting him, but with trembling limbs; for, now that she felt herself defeated in her purpose, her short-lived strength had quite deserted her.

"If you have lost your senses, it is time some one prevented your exposing the fact in the public streets. I may as well tell you, now, that you will never see your father alive again: he has perished by his own hand."

She threw up her arms; her lips parted as if for a shriek, closed noiselessly, and she fell forward in a heavy swoon.

"Who are you?" she asked confusedly, as, on regaining consciousness, her eyes fell on the figure of the stranger who was bending over her couch.

"The physician, madam, who must think and act in your behalf, while you are too weak to act for yourself," replied the grave personage at her side.

"Have I been ill, then? Is this all a hideous dream?—this about my father?—does he still live?"

"I must forbid your talking on any exciting topic, just now; I must indeed, madam; the state of your nervous system forces me to be imperative on this point; so, banish all unpleasant remembrances and compose"——

"Then it is but too true! He has gone, but how? Grahame (he is here, is he not?), pray tell me all."

"I have the particulars from your husband, madam; if, after hearing them, you will promise to compose yourself"——

"Quick, then—I promise," she cried, with a sort of wild impatience, which showed itself in her tone, and in the tremulous workings of her fingers amongst the purple fringes of her couch.

"Your father was no longer young, Mrs. Eglistoun, and in the ordinary course of events, you must have expected"——

"I know, sir; but will you be so very kind as to tell me the manner of his—his departure, and how my dear mother bears it?"

"My dear madam, I must beg that you will not lay the man-

ıer of his death too much to heart ; for his senses had undoubtdly been wandering for several days previous to the rash act, vhich may safely be pronounced the effect of temporary insanity."

Laura's imperative glance brought her the desired information t last.

" Mrs. Avondale awoke in the night, and missing her husband :om her side, immediately made search for him ; and finding all he doors fastened inside, rightly concluded that he could not ave left the house. Unfortunately, she examined the cellar and ɔwer rooms before going to the attic, where she found him.— ıre you faint, madam ?"

He took a bottle of salts from a small mosaic table, and held ; to her nose with one hand, while with the other he possessed imself of her lace handkerchief, and therewith wiped the heavy rops of perspiration from her brow.

" Go on," she whispered, hoarsely.

" And found him," the doctor, with evident reluctance, reumed, " suspended by a rope, so much too long for his purpose hat his knees nearly touched the floor. She held him up in her ırms by main strength, while screaming to the girl, who slept ɔn the same floor, to come to her assistance ; but the fool was so rightened, on reaching the door, that she did nothing but run back ınd bawl ' Murder !' from a front window. It was a watchman vho finally made his way up stairs, and cut down the body ; for, ılthough still warm, and with the neck undislocated, your father vas gone past recall. If your mother had gone directly to the ıttic, and her servant-girl hadn't been a born idiot, I might have ıad a very different story to tell."

" My mother ! tell me of her."

" I understand that she is as calm as could be expected. She ıent a message, this morning, desiring your husband's immediate ɔresence ; but the stupid errand-boy, on being told that Mr. Eglistoun was not up and could not be seen, went away without lelivering his message, which accounts for your not having ɔooner heard of what half the city knows, by this time."

Laura covered her eyes with her hand, and drew in her breath sobbingly, as one who would fain weep but could not.

The doctor strove to soothe her by commonplace platitudes about the duty of resignation under inevitable evils, to all of which she turned a deaf ear.

He was writing a prescription, when she raised herself to a reclining posture on the couch.

"I have no disease, doctor; your medicines will do me no good. I only want to go to my mother—to mingle my tears with hers, and weep away this dreadful pain in my head. I cannot stay here. Tell my husband I shall lose my senses if he does not let me go: he will hearken to *you*."

The physician looked uneasily in her wildly-burning eyes, then threw a quick, questioning glance at Mr. Eglistoun, who, all this time, had been sitting moodily apart.

"If it must be so, I submit," the latter replied to the mute inquiry; "but the house is filled, surrounded, by curious spectators; and if you should see, in to-morrow's paper, an account of the affecting interview between the mother and daughter of the deceased, pray, do not trouble yourself to point out the article for my perusal; for I hate vulgar publicity—nothing worse."

The doctor turned again to the couch.

"Really, Mrs. Eglistoun, all things considered, your own home seems much the best place for you, at least for this one night."

Laura sank back on the cushions.

"I resign myself," she feebly moaned. "I have no longer strength or hope; some one must take care of me."

"I venture to promise that everything in the way of care and attention that you can possibly desire will be at your service," the doctor, with alacrity, rejoined. "You are young, and will speedily shake off this, probably the first great sorrow you have ever known. Think of the blessings you have left, rather than of those you have lost. Be thankful that you have still one left, nearer and dearer than father or mother—a devoted husband who lives but for your happiness."

Laura glanced upward with a quick look of piercing inquiry.

"But supposing I had lost them both, doctor—both at once—and had to bear my great loss alone, without a word or a look

of sympathy—then, must I not be more than human, not to give way to despair?"

The physician looked sorely puzzled, and turned once more to Mr. Eglistoun.

"There seems to be some misconception here, sir; will you not try your own success in soothing my patient?"

"Your pardon, doctor, but I am not that way skilled. Women have the knack of it better than we men: order a dozen nurses, if you like, and they shall be forthcoming. Only excuse me; for these high-wrought, nervous organizations I cannot understand—much less soothe or control."

With that quick insight into the working of human motives, without which a physician never rises to eminence in his profession, the doctor became aware that he had, if I may be allowed the expression, been "harping on the wrong string;" and he spoke to Laura no more of her husband, but inquired if she had any female friend in whose charge she would like to be left.

"Myra," was the single word of reply.

"Her own maid," suggested Mr. Eglistoun explanatively.

Myra was summoned, and received directions to administer a spoonful of a sedative mixture prescribed, on her mistress retiring to rest, repeating the dose, in smaller quantities, every half hour, until sleep came to her relief.

"In this way you will be sure of a comfortable night," he said, addressing Laura in a tone of unconscious compassion; "and in the morning, with your husband's permission, I will come with my own gig and carry you to your mother's."

It was all the same that Mr. Eglistoun gave no sign of according this permission; for the morning found Laura raving in the wild delirium of fever.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LIFE'S MINGLED CUP OF GALL AND SWEETNESS.

THE evening was mild and clear: it was early autumn.

Very cheery, and, despite its humble appointment, not without a certain air of elegance, was the room whose inmates it is my present purpose to introduce to the reader's notice. A neat straw matting covered the floor. Through an open door at the front of the room could be seen a crib, beneath whose snowy quilt a child of scarce two summers was sweetly sleeping. In the low window seats were rows of luxuriant potted plants; and a faint but delicious perfume of rose-geranium and mignonette was in the air. Over the mantel hung a finely executed engraving, copied from one of Titian's master-pieces, in a frame of varnished cones. The paper-hangings were pale blue, relieved by clusters of half-blown roses.

Throughout the entire apartment, reigned that air of extreme cleanliness, so near akin to elegance.

So much for the room; now for its occupants.

At a small table sat, side by side, a gentleman and lady. His massive brow, eagle eyes, and firm-set lips, all bespoke energy and intelligence; while the lady was young and pleasing in countenance. A delicate bloom was on the softly rounded cheeks; and the eyes, spirited yet gentle, were somewhat subdued in their dewy lustre. Hers was one of those sweet, winning faces toward which little children turn with an involuntary smile of spontaneous recognition. Her luxuriant hair was brushed wavily back from her clear, open brow, and fell in clustering ringlets, yellow in the lamplight and brown in the shade, over the comb at the back of her head; thus partially concealing a spinal defect, patent to any but the most careless eye.

The gentleman was reading aloud, from the printed pages of an unbound manuscript; she interrupting him, now and then, to write corrections on their margin.

Near them a young girl of about twelve years was sitting on

a low stool, bending over the chair on which stood her lamp, diligently conning the morrow's lesson. Her tall, lithe figure, dark complexion, and strongly marked features, clearly denoted that she was bound by no ties of consanguinity to the other occupants of the room.

"In your corrections, Miss Verne, do not quite forget the extra labor to which you thus condemn your unfortunate compositor."

"Thank you, Mr. Trueburn; but I have had that individual in my thoughts all the while. Look at these corrected sheets, and you will see that the words I have written for insertion contain the same number of letters as those erased, excepting in rare instances, towards the close of a paragraph, where it makes less difference."

"Very well," replied the first speaker, with an approving bend of the head.

"Bessie, dear," said Ellen, turning to the girlish student, "I believe Jenny is awakening; will you look at her, please?"

And Bessie Ames, whom Ellen, more than a year before, had received as a sacred bequest from her dying mother, rose with alacrity, flitted across the room, and bending over the still fragile Jenny, tenderly soothed her away to the land of dreams once more.

An unperceived addition to the occupants of the room. It was our old acquaintance, Mr. Leroy, his cheek once more bronzed with the hue of healthful toil, who stood unnoticed and ungreeted at his own threshold, with his kindly intelligent eyes scanning the scene before him.

Ellen, pen in hand, was bending over a sheet of manuscript, solely intent on its printed pages, while Mr. Trueburn seemed as solely intent on the perusal of her own countenance. Evidently the study pleased and interested him; for a softer light came to his eyes, and a half-smile relaxed his firm-set lips.

Mr. Leroy started at the sight, and knitting his brows in an involuntary frown, descended the stairs and left the house. Along the street he hurried with reckless steps, careless whither they led him.

"He loves her," he ejaculated to himself, in a tone that showed how much pain the discovery had cost him. Removing his hat, he tossed his hair back from his temples, thus baring his brow to the cool breeze of evening.

He conceived, in its full force, the utter desolateness that would settle down over his home, with Ellen no longer the presiding genius of the household, and muttered, with something of bitterness in his tone:

"Would to Heaven, she had never seen him!"

Then his rapid pace slackened, and the cloud lightened from off his brow.

"Selfish wretch that I am! Have I no thought for *her*?—Her to whom, under Providence, I owe my own life and that of my child—my little Jenny, who *must* have died but for *her* unwearied nursing?"

A remembrance of those weeks during which himself and child had been utterly helpless—solely dependent on the labors of Ellen's pen and the prompt remuneration awarded the same by Mr. Trueburn—flashed across his mind. Yes, he was deeply indebted to both of them, and he, too, could be generous; he would not oppose so much as a feather's weight of obstruction in their way to happiness. Perhaps Ellen might be induced to take the little Jenny along with her, she seemed so strongly attached to the child, and leave him once more, the care-free occupant of his solitary lodgings. He would then be as well off as when she had first come to fill his lone bachelor's den with all the nameless comforts of a home—if he could but think so. Under Ellen's judicious management, his daughter might be trained up to be the joy and pride of his old age.

Old age! what a horribly desolate blank between his present manhood and that advanced period of life, if he should be so fortunate as to reach it.

More than once he turned his steps away from his own door; and when at last he entered the house, it was to find Ellen sitting up alone, awaiting his arrival.

"You are late, Mr. Leroy."

It was only when the children were present that she called

him "Laurence" or "brother Laurence;" when alone, there was ever a little shade of formality between them.

Catching sight of his pale face and disordered hair, she rose hastily with an exclamation of alarm.

"Has anything happened? Are you ill?"

The anxiety for his welfare betrayed in her tones had very nearly overset his new-born resolves. He was strongly tempted to break forth into passionate remonstrances against her leaving him; but restraining the impulse as an unworthy one, he replied negatively to her questions, and complaining of fatigue, rather abruptly sought his own room.

A month elapsed, during which nothing occurred of sufficient note to be jotted down in this faithful family chronicle.

It was late in the morning; and every member of the quiet Leroy household was assembled in the kitchen. Ellen has acquired a certain not ill-becoming air of matronliness and self-reliant dignity, in the discharge of her duties as guide and monitress to the younger members of the family circle. Jenny, still pale and sickly, sits on a patch-work quilt, spread upon the floor, and amuses herself playing with some bits of board and closely curled cedar shavings. Bessie's satchel and hood lie on the chair, beside which she is standing.

"I am all ready to start for school," she says, "but I have still five minutes to spare. What can I do to help you, Ellen? O, here is the tea-kettle wants filling."

With her usual impetuosity of movement, she caught it from the little iron range, ran with it to the sink, filled and replaced it.

"Dear me, see how I have crocked my clean apron. I never can do anything without soiling my clothes."

"You must get Ellen's secret for never catching any of the dust she is so handy in removing," said Mr. Leroy, who, for this one morning, seemed in no hurry to depart.

"Dust never sticks to her, and it always does to me; what do you suppose is the reason, Mr. Leroy?"

"Why, that is the very secret, Bessie, that I was just advising you to get at. This is one of my unfailing tests for dis-

covering a true lady or gentlewoman—if she can keep herself looking like one, while busy about homely household duties; this, to my eyes, marks her of the genuine stamp."

Bessie turned to look at Ellen as she stood at the ironing board, her hair nicely arranged, her figure neatly robed in a cheap print, and linen cuffs, of snowy whiteness, turned back from her slender wrists. "Yes," she said, as if thinking aloud, "nobody could mistake Ellen for anything but a lady, wherever she was, and whatever she was doing. I don't believe but that, if she had to sell apples and oranges at a corner of the streets, every gentleman who stopped to buy an apple or a paper of lozenges would doff his hat to her."

"There, that will answer for this time," said the object of this artless laudation, with a smile and a little brightening of the color on her cheek. "After such a dose of flattery as that, of course, I couldn't have the face to offer a word of reproof about the crocked apron; so run along, it is time you were gone."

"Good morning, then; I will wash out the apron myself, when I come back, so it shall be no trouble to you." And with agile, springy step, Bessie flitted from the room.

"Why do you spend your time in such work as this, Ellen, when you have so many other things to attend to?"

"I am only polishing your shirt-fronts; I can do it so much better and easier than one who does not thoroughly understand the process."

"But I am not so particular about my linen that you should give yourself all this trouble about it. Only let it be white and smooth, neither so stiff as to fray my neck, nor so limp as to run down inside my cravat, and I ask no more."

"You are very moderate in your requirements, to be sure; but, now that the cold weather brings the old rheumatism back to poor Miss Grizzell's wrists, I am afraid she could hardly suit even you; and she would be grievously wounded if we should employ another washerwoman. Besides, now that the heat of summer is over, it is not the least trouble to me—this hour and *a half*, once a week, at the ironing board."

Looking at the light polishing-iron which, under the guidance of the small hand grasping its handle, flew like a bird over the shining plaits of linen, he ceased to urge objections to her continuing the employment she so gracefully pursued.

"Look! baby is holding up her arms to be taken," said Ellen, not unwilling to divert attention from herself and her doings.

"Ah, papa's darling; come then." And first raising her, by one arm, until her head touched the low ceiling, he seated her on his shoulder, bestowing the kiss she bent down to take.

"It seems to me that papa is in wonderfully good spirits, this morning," said Ellen, with a tone of gladness in her voice; for it seemed to her that his brow had lost the shade of care it had long worn, and regained, in a measure, the free, open expression it had been wont to wear in years gone by.

"And with good reason," he rejoined; for this very day I throw off the mill-stone of debt that has so long hung about my neck. I can carry my head erect hereafter, not fearing to meet the eye of any man. I feel like a freeman, just escaped from bonds. To-day I put the last finishing touches to the bell-tower of the church on which I have been so long at work, and then my job is completed. The contract-money for this will more than pay every farthing I owe. Mr. Trueburn has insisted on being the very last to be paid, because he could better afford to wait than most of our creditors. He shall wait no longer.

"To-morrow I commence on the store I have contracted to build. Everything looks promising before me. Building materials are cheap, and capitalists well-disposed to take advantage of the low price of lumber. I have an excellent set of journeymen and 'prentice hands at my control; and what is to prevent my turning a pretty penny the coming season is more than I can see. By another spring, I shall begin to think of putting me up a cottage on the half-acre of land Walgreen offers to make me a present of, on condition that I will build on it, so as to give you to them as a neighbor. I have already the plan of a cottage in my head, not a line of which is out of symmetrical proportion. I will jot it down on paper this evening, so that you may see

how it looks, with its sharp-pointed gables, projecting eaves with airy, taper brackets of my own devising, bay-windows, and trellised porticos, to be covered with vines and running creepers such as, in dear old England, I have often seen. My word for it, the eyes of passers-by shall linger longer on my vine-covered cottage than on its next-door neighbor, Walgreen's stately villa, lofty and spacious as it is. What say you, Ellen, does the prospect of this quiet greenery please *your* fancy as it does mine?"

Keenly searching was the glance with which his eyes sought her own. Frankly and without a moment's hesitancy came her reply.

"It will seem almost like paradise, after being so long hemmed in by city walls; but, after all, I shall be sorry to leave this place, with the old familiar home-look which is always lacking in a new house."

She looked about her with a sad, half-regretful gaze, while Mr. Leroy's face brightened into an expression of actual pleasure. She was not, then, about to leave him. This was the thought uppermost in his mind; but his words were of other things.

"This wee city nursling will get a scrap of color in her cheeks and a little flesh on her puny arms, with fresh country air, I hope. Won't she enjoy going out into the garden for strawberries; and for the pears she can pick herself from the dwarf trees, Walgreen has already set out for me?" And so, with his head full of pleasant schemes for the future, this strong man, whose well-knit limbs and vigorous frame gave good ground of hope for the accomplishment of his plans, went forth to—but I will not anticipate.

Scarcely an hour had passed, after Mr. Leroy's departure, and Ellen was sitting, needle-work in hand, with the babe playing at her feet, when Mr. Trueburn entered the room.

"Fresh from your publishers," he said, in his abrupt but hearty fashion; "and I stole the time from office-hours, to run in and tell you that your book is meeting a fair degree of success. The first edition is already sold, and a second in press."

He took in, at a glance, the complicated expression of joy, surprise, long-baffled hopes at last fulfilled, which strove on her face, and which my feeble pen so imperfectly describes.

"I owe you much," she said falteringly, and with less than her usual coherence of thought and word—"it was all your encouragement—it all came from that."

"Pardon; you owe me nothing," he said, in quick disclaimer. "Your success is the legitimate result of your own faithful, persistent endeavors in the course nature intended you to pursue; and I wish you much joy of your good fortune."

He bowed and withdrew. Laying aside her needle-work, and taking the child in her arms, she gave herself up to the contemplation of the pleasant prospect that had dawned upon her. No longer drifting on life's stormy sea, a stray waif whose loss would affect no one but herself, but with infant arms clinging to her for support—bright young eyes seeking from her own light and guidance. Both these young lives, God willing, she would train up to a noble and useful womanhood. Then her writings! She could now number her readers by hundreds—these she could supply, each, with a few hours' harmless amusement; or, better still, incite some faltering spirit, faint with the burden and heat of the day, to a fresh pursuit of the Good, the Right, and the True.

There was a quick, sharp footstep on the stairs, followed by a peremptory knock at the door.

A vague foreboding of evil took the place of the delicious musings in which she had been indulging; for well she knew that the cup of joy is full rarely quaffed, without the dash of bitterness that proves its earthly origin.

She obeyed the summons at the door, where she found a young man, in overalls spotted with lime and mortar, breathless and nearly speechless from running.

"Is it I whom you wish to see?" she asked, in tones of alarm.

He nodded while inhaling a long-drawn breath.

"What is it? Has anything happened?"

"Yes: Mr. Leroy—he sent me to tell you."

"He sent you! then it can be nothing very serious, or he would have come and told me himself."

"*He* come! I guess he wouldn't: they are bringing him though, as fast as ever they can."

Once more Ellen repeated the speaker's words: "Bringing him!" her eyes, the while, full of intense emotion, and her breath coming fast and waveringly.

"He got a dreadful fall," the man went on to say, "from the steeple to the roof of the church,—a part of the staging gave way, I believe,—and at first we thought he was stone dead; but he came to, pretty quick, and the very first words he said, was, to run and tell you not to be alarmed, for he wasn't much hurt. One of the men is gone for the doctor, and some more on 'em is bringing him home on a shutter; and now I've done my errand; I'll go and meet them."

"Stop a minute. Did he seem to you to be much hurt?"

"Wal, I don't make no bones of saying that he's got a leg broke, as sure as fate, with lots of bruises, an' if he ain't badly done to, inside, he's lucky."

With these words, the bearer of ill-tidings beat a hasty retreat. Only for an instant, did Ellen give way to an irrepressible burst of tears, then girded up her spirit to meet this new trial, hastening to make what preparations in her power lay, for the reception of the wounded man. The sound of subdued voices in the hall below, speedily notified her of his arrival.

Summoning to her face its cheeriest expression, for thus she thought it best to meet him, she hastened below, where the men were stopping for a moment's breathing space before ascending the stairs. Four coarse-featured, strong-fisted men they were, but honest and reliable, or Mr. Leroy would never have employed them; and not without a certain rough graciousness of demeanor. With awkward but respectful bows, they made way, with instinctive courtesy, for Ellen to approach Mr. Leroy.

Her heart gave a great bound, and the cheery expression vanished from her face, as she looked upon that of the sufferer. His eyes were half unclosed, but staring and immovable. The hair of the right temple was matted with the blood that still trickled

ı a gash in the forehead. Blood was also oozing from his er lip, which he had unconsciously gnawed in his strong ,uish ; while his face was of the deadliest pallor. Despite her olution to the contrary, her eyes once more brimmed over with ırs. Ellen forgot the by-standers—forgot everything but her erwhelming desire to speak some word of soothing and comırt to the poor sufferer.

She clasped one clay cold hand in her own, as murmuring "Dear Laurence," she bent tenderly over him.

His eyes farther unclosed, looking at her dimly, and betraying the effort he was making to comprehend the scene about him.

"Are you in great pain, Laurence?"

"Great pain," he feebly articulated: adding, with a sudden effort of memory, "Last debt paid—but you—what is to support us now?"

"My pen. O Laurence, my second book is not trash. Think only of getting well; leave all the rest to me."

Up stairs they gently bore him, those four sturdy men; and under the direction of the doctor and surgeon, who had in the meantime arrived, he was with great care removed from the shutter to his bed. Preparations were next speedily made for setting the badly fractured leg.

"Scissors or shears, if you please," cried the doctor; "for we shall make short work of his clothes."

Then all were banished from the room while the needful operation was performed. Only Ellen was requested to remain within calling distance, in case anything should be needed. One of the men was sent to bring Bessie home, that she might relieve Ellen of the babe she still carried, as, with restless steps, she walked back and forth, out of sight of the inner room, but listening intently for the faintest moan issuing therefrom. It seemed to her an age before the physicians came forth.

"How do you leave him?" was her first anxious question.

"Much exhausted, as a matter of course; it was a bad fracture, and painful in setting. With proper care, however, I see no reason why he should not do well now. He has no internal injuries that we can discover."

"What of the wound on the temple?"

"O, that is not of the slightest consequence," was the careless reply. "Is there anything more you would wish to ask?"

"Only if broken limbs ever prove fatal."

"Very rarely, unless where the system is already in a morbid state, and fever or inflammation supervenes."

With what an air of professional unconcern he spoke the words that gave her such a thrill in the hearing!

After the usual directions in such cases, relating to administering anodynes and keeping the premises quiet, the physicians left. On opening the door for their egress, Ellen saw that the four men were still on the landing, waiting to get the surgeon's opinion as to the probability of Mr. Leroy's speedy recovery. One of the quartette stept into the room, and handed Ellen a paper, on which was written the name and place of abode of the four.

"We will take turns in watching with Mr. Leroy, if you are willing; and if you should want help at any other time, you have only to send for one of us: we will always leave word where we are to be found, when we go out."

The face of the speaker reddened with honest satisfaction as Ellen warmly thanked him for his kind offer, promising to avail herself of it if needful; and further assured him that Mr. Leroy would be much pleased at the thoughtful consideration of those whom he had, that very morning, mentioned in terms of the kindest commendation.

"Oh dear me! you do not think he is really going to die!" exclaimed Bessie, in a piercing whisper, as, a few minutes later, she burst into the room.

"Hush, dear; speak low, instead of whispering. We hope that he will do very well: it is only his leg that is broken."

"But the man who called me out of school said that Mr. Leroy had had a terrible fall; and that it was a wonder he hadn't been killed on the spot."

"We ought to be very thankful that he was not," said Ellen, with a slight shudder; "and we must take the very best care of him until he is well again. If you will carry Jenny out into

the kitchen, and keep her quiet, I will go now and see if he needs anything."

"But mayn't I just look at him, before I go?"

"O yes, if you will step softly, and not speak while you are in the room."

On tiptoe, with baby in her arms, Bessie followed her silent conductress to Mr. Leroy's bedside. He was lying with closed eyes, seemingly faint and exhausted.

Little Jenny, from the arms of her youthful nurse, bent forward and kissed him.

"Poor papa."

"The pain-contracted lips relaxed sufficiently to prove the father's appreciation of this childish sympathy.

With subdued, noiseless tread, Bessie glided away with her infant charge.

Mr. Leroy's lips moved, and his sole attendant bent her ear to catch the whispered words.

"Kiss me, Ellen."

Without a moment's hesitation, she pressed her lips to his cheek.

"Poor Laurence, it is too hard—this pain—I only wish I could bear a part of it for you; I would so gladly do so if it were possible."

"All this! and yet you could not love me."

At another moment, Ellen would have remained resolutely silent; but now that she saw him crushed down with a heavy weight of suffering, with weeks of torture in prospect, the secret she had thought to have borne with her to the grave escaped in her reply.

"Could not! O, Laurence, I have, Heaven help me! but too faithfully."

For the moment, spirit triumphed over bodily weakness, and shone brightly through the dim mist with which pain had veiled his eyes.

"And yet you refused to be my wife."

"I thought it was but in pity you asked it of me: you never said you loved me."

"Then hear me say so, now."

Still nearer to his own he drew her flushed and drooping face, her yellow curls mingling with his brown locks, while into her ear he poured those thrilling words which should have but a single hearer.

Suddenly his encircling arm relaxed and fell powerless by his side. He had fainted. Ellen started back in alarm, bitterly reproaching herself for having momentarily forgotten how much depended on his being kept quiet and free from excitement. She feared to administer a restorative, even if she could have done so, lest in the start of returning consciousness, he should displace the splints and bandages that had been arranged with so much care.

Infinitely relieved was she when his eyes once more unclosed, and with a look of unutterable tenderness sought her own.

A glad gush of tears was her immediate response.

Thus is it ever. There is no perfectibility to earthly happiness; and joy too deep for words, reaching down to the fountain of tears, is, perhaps, the saddest emotion the human heart can know.

"In my hour of utter helplessness, I give myself to you, Ellen; a poor boon truly, which your goodness will not let you refuse."

"Hush! my beloved. In *my* hour of utter helplessness your care saved my life. In the full strength of your manhood there was too great a distance between us—you in the full tide of manly vigor, I——"

She pointed significantly over her slightly misshapen shoulder.

"Now I am nearer to you—less unworthy. Not another word" (seeing him about to speak); "I am going to darken the room, now, and go away. Please be very quiet, and not even try to think if it tires you. If you want anything speak my name; I shall not be out of hearing."

For a time there was unbroken silence, then a light tap summoned Ellen to the door.

It was Mr. Trueburn, who had called to express his sorrow at the accident of which he had but just heard, to learn the physicians' verdict, and to offer assistance if needed.

Replying to all his inquiries, and promising to call upon him if occasion required, Ellen still detained him by a gesture of the hand as he was about to depart.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Trueburn, but I wish to speak to you, just one minute, about myself. You asked me, not many days ago, if there was any other tie than that of sisterly regard binding me to Mr. Leroy, and I answered you truly in the negative; but the relations between us have changed since then. It is not as of a brother I think of him now."

She paused in some little confusion, and as her companion noted the varying color on her cheek, the tender light of her drooping eyes, a shade came over his own strongly defined features; while, in her utter unconsciousness of inflicting pain, she was far enough from imagining that her words had rung the knell to the sweetest hopes he had ever known.

"I trust he may not have to go through severe and prolonged suffering, before he is able to get about again," she resumed, anxiety banishing the blushes from her cheek.

"I sincerely wish him a speedy recovery," was the brief response.

"And then," pursued Ellen, "if I can but make his home as happy as he deserves it to be."

"O, *his* happiness is safe enough," Mr. Trueburn hastily interposed, in a tone of irritation so marked, that Ellen looked up in surprise.

He checked himself, ashamed that he had so given way to his feelings.

"I mean," he said, calming his tones, "that you would make the joy and delight of any man's home, over which you should preside as mistress."

She thanked him for his too flattering opinion of her, but without affecting to doubt its sincerity.

"I make no apology," she said, "for inflicting upon you this unasked confidence; for you have always shown so kind an interest in all that concerns me, that I knew you would be glad to be told of what so nearly affects my future happiness."

He bowed, but, truth to tell, his countenance expressed anything but gladness at receiving her communication.

"The old footing of friendship, on which we have so long stood, need not, I hope, be affected by this new tie you have formed."

"Why should it be? I do not make friends so easily that I can afford to lose the few long-tried ones I have been so fortunate as to win." And she looked in his face with her own frank, beaming glance; but he avoided meeting her eye, and with a hasty bow, turned abruptly away and descended the stairs, leaving her in the vain expectation of receiving from him some word of parting, little dreaming that at heart, he was saying:

"I have lost the only woman with whom I ever felt a wish to spend my days."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LAURA'S ESCAPE.

In the high-ceiled, gilt-corniced room to which our story now brings us, everything gives token of the wealth and luxurious tastes of its owner. Soft velvet pile covers its floor; and from the canopied bed, showing itself through a side-door leading to the adjoining room, curtains of richly wrought lace are looped back with crimson cords, terminating in large silken tassels of the same color. The mantel, composed of a slab of purest Carrara marble, is upheld by the dainty finger-tips of a row of elaborately carved statuettes in the same material, their tiny feet resting on a narrow projection below. Here are to be found all those delicate toilette appliances which the most fastidious feminine taste could desire; and, from opposite sides of the room, large full-length mirrors reflected each others polished surfaces. In a commodious dressing-chair, a middle-aged woman, sole occupant of the room, is quietly dozing.

In the canopied bed of the adjoining chamber rests a young and beautiful woman, although the ravages of disease are to be plainly traced on the pallid face, and in the attenuated hand, so restlessly toying with the embroidered cambric sheet. The lady, so tenderly bending over her from the easy-chair she occupies, is of mature years, and clad in deep mourning robes.

"Mamma," said the younger of the two, "how many days have I lost—days of which I remember nothing?"

"It is a little more than two weeks, my love, since I came to you. It was only yesterday that you first recognized me."

"You so long beside me, and I not to know it, when I so longed for you, before you came!" murmured the invalid in tones of full regret. "Who told you I was ill?" she asked abruptly, after a few moments' silence.

"Your physician. He said you were constantly calling for me, in the unconsciousness of fever."

"Then it was not *he!* Does he come in here often?" A convulsive shivering seized upon the speaker, as, in a trembling nervous way, she put this not very lucid question.

"Whom do you mean, Laura, you husband?"

"Don't call him *that:* he is no husband to me. Don't look at me in that frightened way; I have not lost my senses again; but I must speak out, or I shall die. His marriage vows were perjuries;—that is right; shut the door that *she* may not hear,—his promise to love and cherish me, a deliberate and wilful falsehood. His love is for another—I have seen it—I know it. It is death to me to live under the same roof with him. I will not do it; no, not if I have to dash myself headlong from the window, to be brought in a lifeless corpse from the streets."

A wild light, like that of insanity, flashed from her determined eyes, while a spot of living crimson lighted up the pallor of her cheek.

Mrs. Avondale trembled almost as much as her daughter.

"Stop, Laura; you are talking wickedly and at random," she said, with whitening lips. "Your life, my child, is God's own precious gift. You dare not—*you dare not* return it to

him before it is required of you. I beg and beseech of you not to agonize me again with such horrible words. Have mercy on me; for I am much shaken with the great grief you are yet too weak to speak of. Remember that only death can part you from your husband; and let no light thing estrange you from one bound to you for life."

"Then let me die!" cried Laura, with a passionate outburst of loud, almost childish weeping.

The mother, deeply moved, took the daughter's head to her shoulder, striving to wipe away her flowing tears.

"Hush, Laura, darling, you are hurting yourself by giving way to your feelings so. I did not mean to say a word to grieve you. I only thought to advise you for the best, as to your conduct toward one you have solemnly vowed to honor."

Laura's tears fell with gentler flow.

"And so I did honor him as long as he would let me, as long as honor was his due—until I found he was distractedly in love with another than myself; one young and fair whom he would have married years ago, although, in the eyes of society, she was not his equal, if his father had not broken off the match. But they are united now. She is his wife in the sight of Heaven, if I do bear his name before the world. I followed them myself through the dark streets, at night, never thinking of fear as long as I had them in my sight; and so traced them to a house, which he afterwards confessed to me, when I contrived to question him on the subject, a lady should blush to so much as mention. And this is the man you would counsel me to *honor! Never!* Let me but once escape, and I would sooner beg in the streets than seek shelter at his hands."

"O my child! I feared for you, but never dreamed it would come to this." Folding Laura in her arms, mother and daughter wept together in that silent embrace.

"What makes everything in the room swim about so?" Laura asked, raising her head and pressing her hand to her temples.

"You have talked too much, poor child; you are too weak to bear this excitement. Do not let us allude to the subject again, until you are stronger. I will drop you out some ether, now; and after that you must rest."

"Only one more question, mamma, and I will desist: Do you still advise me to remain here, and bear what I have borne?—what has driven me out of my senses, and nearly brought me to the grave?"

"No, my child; I will take you away from this place, all in good time; now please inhale this ether and try to get some rest."

Laura obeyed unquestioningly; and as her senses gradually deadened into uneasy slumber, the mother's heart yearned over this poor blighted flower, so early chilled by the frosts of neglect.

A considerable accession of fever, accompanied by slight mental wanderings, was the immediate consequence of the violent excitement to which Laura had subjected herself, in her conversation with her mother. The third day thereafter the former fell into a quiet and refreshing slumber, from which she awoke calm and in her right mind.

"Mamma, the doctor says I have held my own remarkably, considering my long illness; if it's no trouble to you, I would like to look at myself in the glass."

With a faint shade of reluctance in her manner, Mrs. Avondale took from the dressing-table an oval mirror in a framework of bronze, and held it before her daughter's face.

Fixedly, and with a look of deep sadness, did the sick woman scan the reflection of her own wasted features. How unnaturally large and prominent the eyes! How pinched and sharp the finely cut Grecian nose! and the once rounded cheeks how sunken and wan!

With a sigh she closed her eyes and turned away her head.

"Oh, mamma! it is the face of a corpse."

Mrs. Avondale removed the mirror with a thrill of dread, at these words of ominous import. She had not the heart to

reply to them; and experienced a vague feeling of relief at Laura's next question.

"Did you not say, mamma, that we would go away from here together, soon?"

"Yes, my love; but we will not talk about it till you are a little stronger. All you have to do is to keep quiet and get well, leaving me to plan for both of us."

Laura gave her mother a look of beaming affection as she softly murmured:

"It is so pleasant to be cared for."

Something in the tone in which these words were spoken brought tears to the mother's eyes.

For a brief space Laura seemed unusually at ease, then became restless and perturbed.

"Mamma, I think it would hurt me less to tell you all the misgivings I have, than to keep them to myself; they make me so very wretched."

"What troubles you now, darling?"

"Do you think he" (she never said "my husband" now) "will let me go away from here, with you?"

The mother's look grew troubled, and she hesitated for a reply.

"Not that I am so foolish as to imagine he cares for me in the least," Laura hastened to explain; "but the scandal of a separation! will he submit to it? You know how proud he is—not so much fearing the commission of evil as the being evil spoken of. He is not ignorant of the reason I have for deserting him; and if he will only let me go, my lips shall be forever sealed in silence to everybody but you. He may invent whatever cause he chooses to account for my absence. Can't it be so? or must I bear his name till the law permits me to resign it? I am *so* weak, I don't see things very clearly. If I could only be quiet in my mind!"

Mrs. Avondale saw with unspeakable dread, that the fever-spot was kindling on Laura's cheek, and a wild gleam flashing once more from her eyes. In the mother's extremity, she found courage to adopt a suddenly conceived resolution. With these ever-recurring paroxysms of excitement, it was becoming every

day more plain to perceive that Laura could never regain her health. At all hazards, she must be removed.

"Laura, either with, or without, his consent, I will take you away from this house, at all risks, and that as soon as you are able to bear the removal. Rest contentedly in my promise, and not worry yourself about the ways and means of getting away, that you may the sooner gain strength to go."

Laura took her mother's hand and enfolding it in both her own, lay thus, for a time, without speaking.

"Just one word, mamma, and I will vex you with no more questions. Did not papa—you see I can mention his dear name without shrinking, for I can endure what is past remedy—leave his affairs in a very bad state? Our support—where is that to come from?"

"Your father's creditors were large-hearted men. I would have given up all to satisfy their just claims, but they would not hear of it; and, thanks to their liberality, I have still enough to set me up in some small business—a thread-store, or something of that sort."

"You a shopkeeper! O, mamma!"

A faint color mounted to Mrs. Avondale's cheek; but she had never looked more stately, more self-sustained in her own dignity, than when she calmly asked, "Why not, my child? Is there anything degrading to woman in striving to keep herself from becoming a burden to others, by any legitimate means at her command? It was as a shop-woman that I supported my own father and mother, when I was but a girl. Old habits will easily come back to me by practice."

"You are right, mamma; I spoke not my better thought. I, too, had purposed to support you—both of you—by giving lessons in music, but it was ordered otherwise."

"I may yet live to need your services, my love; when I am old, you will but be in life's prime."

While she was yet speaking, she perceived Laura's eyes to dilate in a fixed and unnatural stare, as if striving more accurately to discern the outlines of some terrible phantom, as yet unperceived by her mother.

Mrs. Avondale turned her head quickly in the direction indicated by Laura's gaze, to see Mr. Eglistoun standing just inside the door.

"How is she to-day?" he asked in a cold, unmoved tone, without offering to approach the bedside.

"A little better to-day, I think; but still needing the most careful nursing to guard against the danger of a relapse."

He toyed with the immaculate gloves he held in his hand, drawing one of them on, as if about to leave the house.

"Where is her nurse?" was the second question addressed to his mother-in-law.

"Asleep in her own room: she was kept awake a considerable part of the night."

"Let her, by all means, have an assistant, if she is not equal to the performance of the duties required of her. In her illness, your companionship seems acceptable to my wife, but I have not the remotest intention of burdening you with the responsibilities of a nurse in my family."

Mrs. Avondale's spirit writhed at every word he uttered. The plan for removing her daughter from his house, which had seemed so feasible, so easy of execution, in his absence, loomed up into fearful proportions in his inexorable presence. What could two poor women effect, when opposed by his adamantine will? Her voice was low and unsteady as she replied:

"A mother's care of her only child is a pleasant duty, and one from which I have no desire to be relieved."

"I shall find some means of repaying you for your self-assumed task," he said, in a tone deprecating the idea of remaining long under obligation to the person addressed.

"What you call a task is my only remaining comfort," she sadly rejoined.

Bowing with an air of polite incredulity, Mr. Eglistoun left the room.

Not until the sound of his footsteps died on the stairs, did Mrs. Avondale turn to look at her daughter, who had not spoken since her husband's entrance. On pushing aside the curtain, behind which Laura had screened herself, her face was

found to be livid, her eyes fixed, and her hands of an icy coldness.

Alarmed as she was, Mrs. Avondale yet refrained from crying out for assistance, not wishing to recall Mr. Eglistoun to the room. Myra, however, was hastily summoned, and despatched for the nurse. In warm blankets Laura was speedily folded, and her cold hands and feet briskly chafed, with a view of restoring the vital warmth so suddenly suspended.

The doctor, for whom a messenger had been sent, soon made his appearance; and, by the aid of powerful restoratives, Laura at last regained a feeble state of consciousness.

"I gave orders that my patient should be kept perfectly quiet, and my orders have evidently been disobeyed," said the physician, almost sternly. "There must have been some cause for an attack like this: I saw no reason to apprehend anything of the kind, this morning."

He looked inquiringly at Mrs. Avondale who, with a look of involuntary distrust, glanced quickly in the direction of the nurse.

"Can I speak with you a moment, alone, madam?" he quickly asked, for his perceptions were of the keenest.

She led the way to the dressing-room; and when, after a short interview, the man of science prepared to take leave, among his directions to the nurse, was one to the effect that, until the present critical period in his patient's disease was safely passed, no one but the three women then present were to be permitted access to her apartment.

Once more, mother and child were left to themselves. Laura was pale even to ghastliness.

"It is of no use, mamma," she feebly whispered. "The struggle is too hard for me: I will strive no longer."

She was perfectly calm; and the large tears that had been slowly gathering in her eyes, rolled over her colorless cheek.

Mrs. Avondale gently wiped them away.

"You will feel better in a few days, darling. Keep up good courage; you are to see no one but Myra and the nurse while we remain here. As soon as you are strong enough to bear re-

moval, the doctor, who is our friend, will insist on your having a change of residence, if it is only to a more quiet part of the city. Myra is ready to go with us; and, once away, we will never return. Do you understand me, dear?"

Laura drew her hand feebly across her forehead.

"I believe—not—very clearly. It tires me to—to try." And her lids, with a slow, fluttering movement, drooped over eyes that seemed to see neither hope nor joy in the world.

Thus the wife, above stairs; while the husband below, since returning from his short walk, had been pacing moodily to and fro in the library, a lofty and spacious room, made oval by the book-cases built into either corner.

The door opened behind him, and the sound of an entering footstep fell on his ear. He turned haughtily to resent the unannounced intrusion, but his brow cleared as his eyes fell on his sister. She was paler than her wont; and the old look of discontent had deepened into one of settled gloom.

"To think that I have been kept so long away, by our mother's sad state, and now I am forbidden to go up to Laura's room, or even to see her."

"'Tis a wonder they so much as permit you to see *me*," he impatiently rejoined. "Talk of a man's house being his castle! only just let a medical autocrat get a firm foothold in it, and the owner's authority becomes no more than a polite myth in which nobody believes; all his servants being under strict professional drill, the fiat of the physician being as inexorable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. I myself have just received orders not to venture inside Laura's door, until permission is accorded me from head-quarters."

"Why was this? Is Laura worse?"

"No; better, so that uncomfortable woman her mother assured me within the hour; but a physician's crotchets are past finding out. I expect the next move will be to forbid me the house; 'twould be on a par with past impertinence."

"Poor Laura!" mused Elmeira, "how suddenly she has faded! What a peerless creature she was, but a few short months ago."

"Very beautiful, certainly," assented Mr. Eglistoun, rather uneasily; "but she was an only child, sadly spoiled, and wholly destitute of self-control."

Elmeira made no attempt to contradict this assertion, but, after a little pause, asked:

"Do you think, Grahame, that, considering what her antecedents have been, you have watched over the poor child quite as tenderly as you ought?"

From no other living mortal would he have brooked such form of speech, to none other have replied as he did:

"Perhaps not, Elmeira; I do not recognize in myself the materials requisite for the composition of an uxorious husband. I could never bow myself, a bond-slave, to the caprices of any woman—never submit myself to a wife, as to an imperial dictress, who was to regulate the exact mode in which I was to spend every hour in the twenty-four—who was to select and reject my friends and acquaintances, as though I had surrendered all judgment and discrimination to her sole keeping. I repeat that I am *not* the man tamely to submit to this sort of female domination; and, by Heaven! Laura's exactions drive me still farther away from her—tempt and dare me onward to the very path she *commands* me to shun."

There was scorn and the bitterness of a sore spirit in Elmeira's passionate rejoinder.

"The old manly fashion, from Adam downward," she said, with curling lip, "of shifting the responsibility from his own to weaker shoulders. 'Eve tempted me.' Ah, what true nobility of manhood was there!"

She paused abruptly, the light fading from her eyes, and an attitude of weariness stealing over her.

"Pardon, my brother; I did not come here to speak words like these, when we so sadly need each others' sympathy. I would speak of our mother. She suffers intensely. I have no doubt that the doctor is right in ascribing the cause of her present alarming condition to a too free use of opium. She has paralyzed her digestive organs with narcotics, until they refuse

to act at all; and, O Grahame! our mother is starving—literally starving—in the midst of plenty."

Mr. Eglistoun looked rather annoyed than sympathetic, as he replied, in an exculpatory sort of way:

"She has the best medical advice in the city; and it can do her no possible good to have us distress ourselves by witnessing sufferings we are powerless to relieve."

"There you are mistaken, brother; it does do her good to have familiar faces—the faces of her children—about her. We shall not long have her with us, I feel sure; for she cannot long support such intolerable agony as she is called on to endure, and that without alleviation, for even opium she now rejects with disgust, and the very smell of ether throws her into convulsions. I cannot bear the thought of giving her up to the care of hirelings, in her last days; but I am thoroughly worn out myself. She has asked for you, several times, since your last call. Why not come home with me, and watch by her bedside for this one night?"

"Really, Elmeira, this is asking too much. I have no aptitude for the duties of a nurse; besides, there is no necessity for my agonizing myself, for the whole livelong night, by the sight of sufferings which a paid watcher would know much better than myself how to relieve. No, Elmeira; I will go and see her, but you must not urge me to stay for the night."

"Come, then; we cannot be with her too soon."

He hesitated a moment, before replying, reddened slightly, and abated a little the stateliness of his demeanor.

"I will come to her very soon, *very* soon, but not now; I have an engagement for this evening."

"An engagement! O, Grahame!" she exclaimed in accents of sorrow and reproach.

"Only a simple promise to spend an evening with a friend," he explained, deprecatingly. "What is a man to do when there is illness in his house, and he is forbidden to set foot inside any occupied room under his own roof? Of course I cannot ask my friends to drop in here, where no one

is allowed to speak louder than a whisper. I cannot be of the least use here, as you see; and yet, if I should venture to so much as show my face at opera or club-room, I should be set down as a monster of brutality and neglect by a *discriminating* public. What resource have I against utter stagnation, if it be not an occasional quiet evening with a friend?"

Mr. Eglistoun had entirely regained his composure, and fully justified himself in his own eyes, if not in those of his hearer.

"I did not come here to reproach you," she said with a sigh of weariness. "It is time I was back at my post."

With languid movement, she rose to depart. He gave her his arm, and, receiving his hat from a servant in the hall, conducted her to the carriage, carefully wrapping about her the warm robe of crimson cloth with which it was provided, and bidding her be of good cheer—as he would be with her early on the following morning. Elmeira bowed without reply. A great choking was in her throat, at thought of the lonely vigil, shared only by hirelings, to which she returned. Well might she dread the approaching night, for in its shades Death was the unwelcome guest who invaded the old family mansion, and, with his icy touch, forever stilled the anguish for which there was no earthly balm.

At the next call of Laura's physician, he pronounced her in a state of relapse. Delirious but gentle fancies filled her head. In thought, she was a child once more, and sang scraps of songs, she had learned in her school days. At the sea-shore, in the long summer days, she played in the surf, as she had often done when a child; or listened, when the wind was wild, to the deafening roar of the waves, as they broke on the shelving beach. Admiring the lovely shells, she imagined to be grasped in her hand, she would hold them out for her mother's inspection, with sunny smiles that moved Mrs. Avondale to tears.

One day she awoke from a sound sleep; and Myra, who happened, for the time, to be her sole attendant, saw that the calm light of reason was beaming from her eyes.

"Where is mamma?" she asked in a tone of extreme languor.

"Lying down, for a few minutes, in the dressing-room.—Shall I call her?" Myra did not tell her mistress that she had been so restless, so evidently in pain, that her mother had scarcely left her bedside, the whole night through; and had snatched the opportunity for a moment's repose offered by her daughter's tranquil slumber.

"Do not disturb her," Laura feebly entreated, "for I am rather glad she is not here. A spoonful of cordial, please; I am faint. Thank you. Now give me a scrap of paper and a pencil; you know where to find both."

Myra silently and swiftly obeyed.

"That little box-cover I want, to lay my paper on."

It was given her.

"Do you think you can raise my head so that I can see to write?"

This also was accomplished; but the exertion of writing proved more wearisome than the enfeebled invalid had anticipated. More than once, the pencil had fallen from her nerveless fingers; but still she persevered in her task.

There was a clammy dampness on her brow, as she fell back, exhausted, on her pillow. Very different from her usual dainty style of calligraphy was the scarcely legible scrawl she extended to her maid. For several minutes her breath came quick and pantingly, and she was unable to speak.

"Give it to Mr. Eglistoun after—after I am gone; and now speak to mamma."

Mrs. Avondale came in hurriedly, and took her place at her daughter's bedside.

"How are you, dear love?" she asked, looking anxiously in Laura's face.

"Very weary, but not in pain,"

"Let me put my arm under your head; change of attitude may give you relief."

Laura faintly smiled assent; and for a considerable time, lay motionless in her mother's embrace; but the latter saw by the workings of her face, that Laura's mind was far from being as passive as her frame.

"Are you thinking of anything that troubles you, my darling?"

Laura opened her eyes, in which shone an expression, her mother had never seen there before.

"Mamma, the past grows clearer to me, now; and I have not made a good use of its teachings. I learned, years ago, in Sunday-school, that God does not willingly, nor without some wise purpose, afflict his creatures, but I never *felt* it till now. How selfish I have been!—how ambitious of vain worldly distinctions!—how wholly absorbed in the trifles of this little life, that is but as a drop to the ocean, compared to that vast life stretching away into the infinity, but just before me! Will you not read me a chapter in the Bible?"

Myra was despatched to the library, in quest of this much neglected volume.

"Is there anything you would like particularly to hear read?" asked Mrs. Avondale, as she unfastened the heavy gold clasps that bound the sacred book.

"The story of the thief upon the cross," in low, reverent tones Laura replied.

It was read to her. As Mrs. Avondale finished reading, she saw with a thrill of indescribable awe, that a change had come over Laura's countenance—a shadow as of some invisible presence.

"Will some one pray with me?"

Faint the whispered request, but the mother's quick ear failed not to catch its import. She had never made any professions of practical religion, never been in the exercise of habitual prayer, and now felt quite unequal to what was required of her. In helpless appeal, she looked at the down-cast, tear-stained face of

poor Myra, as she stood in the shade of the curtains. The former was discussing in her own mind the propriety of despatching a messenger in haste for a clergyman, when the latter came to her side. Myra was trembling very much; but a look of high resolve ennobled her homely features.

"I have prayed *for* her every day, and every hour in the day, all through her illness, why not *with* her, now?"

Laura opened her eyes, with a look of earnest gratitude, while her soft white hand sought that of her devoted maid, in a tender clasp.

"In *His* sight you are better than I," she feebly murmured; "and may your prayers prevail."

Sinking upon her knees, Myra, in simple and homely phrase, besought the Giver of all good, that, whatever the path he had marked out for his suffering creature, He would make it smooth for her feet to tread—bright with rays divine from His own reconciled countenance. Her hearers almost felt the presence of the high and mighty One to whom she appealed with such unshaken trust, and without so much as the shadow of a fear that He might turn a deaf ear to her entreaties.

Mrs. Avondale, after ascertaining by the motion of Laura's lips that she breathed after Myra the petition in her own behalf, bowed her head, and, in spirit, joined in the cry for mercy.

Myra had risen from her kneeling posture, but still Laura's lips moved as in prayer. Mrs. Avondale bent her ear to catch the whispered words.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Suddenly the glazing eyes unclosed.

"Myra—the paper."

She held out her cold hand to receive the scrawl, so lately written by herself.

"The pencil, quick, Myra; for the night is coming on, and my fingers are stiff with the cold."

The pencil was placed in her hand; her head raised on the pillow; and with great effort, she succeeded in adding a single

line to what she had already written, then sank back, overcome by the exertion.

"Mamma, darling, it is cold here; warm my hands in yours, please. How dark it grows! light the gas that I may see you once more—once more."

But never, with earthly vision, will she look on human face again. From all the "ills that flesh is heir to," poor Laura has made her final escape.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT.

"She has fainted," was Myra's frightened exclamation, as she unwittingly looked in the face of the dead.

Mrs. Avondale, with loving hands, closed the eyes that would meet her own in tender glances never again, and sank back in her chair, tearless, and yet how utterly bereaved!

"O, Myra! she will never need our care any more: she has gone home to Heaven."

A sharp cry from Myra brought the nurse to the room, and she it was who first informed Mr. Eglistoun of his loss. He came running up stairs, his face very white and wholly bereft of its ordinary calm impassiveness of expression.

"She has but fainted," he also cried, on catching sight of her serene face, composed as if in pleasant slumber.

He caught her hand in his own, but something in its relaxed muscles made him drop it hastily, with a slight shudder.

"I never thought of such an ending to her illness as this," he said, as if speaking to himself, still looking fixidly at the placid face that will never more seek, or shrink from, his gaze. "I was thinking of proposing a sea-voyage, when spring opened. Cuba or Italy, I would have taken her to one or the other, if I had thought her health would be benefitted by the change. I never dreamed

she was in danger. Well (after a pause), it is a consolation to think that she had the very best medical attendance the city could afford. Everything that *could* have been done for her, *has* been done. Since she has lived with me, she has never known what it was to have a want or a care. In all that relates to her, I have nothing with which to reproach myself."

Mrs. Avondale partly rose from her chair, a look of passionate reproach driving the expression of stony anguish from her eyes, and extended her arm toward her widowed son-in-law, as if about to address him: but, catching sight of the lifeless clay that still bore the semblance of the departed, all other emotions were swallowed up in the bitter sense of bereavement, and she sank back in tears—few and burning, like the scant drops heralding the tempest or the hurricane, leaving the air sultrier and more oppressive than before their fall.

"Here is a paper she desired me to give you, sir. She wrote it to-day," faltered Myra, handing Mr. Eglistoun the scrawl that Laura's poor dying hand had so lately traced.

He took the paper without remark; and, as he studied out its contents, word by word, the softened expression of his face gave place to its old habitual look of cold impassiveness. He handed the paper to Mrs. Avondale, after finishing its perusal.

"I presume she was scarcely in her right mind when she wrote this; nevertheless, her strangely expressed wishes shall be scrupulously respected. As they closely concern yourself, perhaps you would like to read them.

"Would you allow me to keep the paper? which was partially written in her last moments."

"Certainly; it is of no value to me; but I think you will find some difficulty in deciphering that last line, which, to me, is wholly incomprehensible."

With cold, almost haughty civility, he offered his arm to his mother-in-law.

"I think it would be better for you to leave the room, now. If her maid and nurse cannot perform what requires to be done here, I will procure whatever assistance they may need."

"Pray do not insist on my going," entreated Mrs. Avondale.

"She was all that was left to me, and I would remain with her to the very last."

"As you will, madam."

With a firm step he left the room. Then Mrs. Avondale unfolded the paper he had left with her, and with unsteady vision read as follows:

"MY LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT.

"It is my desire that my dear mother should have all the clothing and jewelry that is my very own, together with all the books having 'Laura Avondale' written on the fly-leaf. These we have read together in the old, happy home; and to no other living person would they have the same value as to my beloved mother, ever tender and true. Only the gold ring containing my hair, and the set of pearls, I reserve for Myra—faithful servant and trusty friend—begging that the latter may be sold for her benefit. If there is anything else I can really call my own, let it go toward placing her beyond want.

"LAURA."

The last line, which she had strained her failing vision, dim with death's pale mists, to write, ran thus:

"To my husband, I bequeath my love and forgiveness."

Mrs. Avondale's tears fell fast, as her eyes rested on the scarcely legible words.

"Darling," she murmured, almost heart-broken at her loss. "And this is what, to him, is wholly incomprehensible! Yes, Laura, your better and nobler self he has never succeeded in comprehending. I doubt if the man is capable of a true affection—one that seeks ever the good of its object."

It may not be amiss, anticipating a little the course of my story, to remark here, that Laura's will was faithfully executed in spirit, if not strictly according to its letter. Everything that had belonged to her, down to a portrait in oils by a celebrated French artist, was given to her mother. It almost seemed as though Mr. Eglistoun desired to rid himself of every memento of his ill-starred union. The set of pearls was not sold; but, in its

place, one hundred dollars was given to Myra, on her leaving the house in the service of Mrs. Avondale, who rented an eligible tenement, half shop and half dwelling, and was soon at the head of a small but thriving business; a considerable share of its proceeds being devoted to the relief of the poor and the unfortunate, so that her name soon came to be a word of household benediction in that quarter of the city where she dwelt. On leaving the residence of her son-in-law, by tacit agreement all intercourse ceased between them.

But, to return from this long digression. Laura's lovely features assumed, in death, a more noble and spiritual type of beauty than in life they had ever worn. Her cheeks looked less sunken than for a short period previous to her decease; the broad, white brow freed itself from the furrows pain and sorrow had lately ploughed thereon; and the finely formed mouth was superlatively lovely in its expression of serene repose.

Every day, up to the one appointed for her burial, Laura's poor senseless hands were filled, and her pillow strewn, with the blossoms of rare and costly exotics, which breathed away their little lives in choicest perfume.

"Alas!" sighed the mother, "if *he* would but have strewn her life-path with blossoms of tenderness and affection, she might even now be here to enjoy their fragrance."

The day and hour of the funeral arrived. Mr. Eglistoun had been as particular about Laura's personal appearance, in having her arrayed for the grave, as when, two short years before, he had brought her, a gay and blithesome bride, to the spacious drawing-room, where now she lies a corpse.

In a rosewood casket, inlaid with jet and lined with white fluted satin, they have lain her, for her last long sleep. Through the foot of the open coffin, her snowy silk robe falls in graceful folds to the floor. Her softly rounded throat is covered only by a fine transparent lace. Heavy braids of silky hair rest on the satin pillow that supports her head. Pale roses are in her hands, and tiny white flowers nestle against her cold cheek.

Mrs. Avondale sits near; and an occasional stifled sob from her lips tells that she feels, in its full force, the bitter sense of be-

reavement. Her son-in-law, stately and erect as usual, occupies the seat beside her, preserving just that air of grave propriety suited to the solemnity of the occasion.

Several relatives of the Eglistoun family are ranged on either hand, who, from time to time, glance, with pitying eyes, at the afflicted widower; in their hearts commending the firm self-control that, in such an hour, enables him to hide his grief from prying eyes, and wear an air of outward calm.

The last prayer had been said over the departed, and preparations were commenced for removing the casket, with its precious dust, sacred as the forsaken tenement of an immortal spirit, to the hearse.

While this was occurring inside, whoever had happened to have looked down the street running past the house, might have noticed the approach of a plain one-horse vehicle, as it slowly made its way over the pavement. Its occupants, a lady and gentleman, with a little girl of two years seated between them, are as unpretentious in appearance as itself. The lady is simply and inexpensively dressed; but about every article of her attire there is a harmony of color and material, investing her with an air of taste and elegance that many a richer toilette fails to confer on its wearer. She fills the office of driver herself, while her companion leans back with an air of extreme languor in every movement. He was thin and pale, and had evidently but lately risen from a bed of illness.

"A funeral!" he ejaculated, pointing to the long line of carriages, headed by a hearse, the heads of its black horses waving with sable plumes.

"How well I remember the bridal, Laurence." And the speaker grew a shade less rosy as she looked, half apprehensively, in the face of her listener. To him there seemed to be no unpleasant memories awakened by the scene.

She checked her horse's pace to a walk, before speaking again.

"Poor Mrs. Eglistoun! I know this is her funeral; for I saw her death in the paper, a day or two since."

Her companion roused himself; and looked forth with a greater display of interest than he had yet evinced.

"A splendidly designed house, and yet death found his way into it. Think you, Ellen, there is any truth in his loving a shining mark?"

"Perhaps so, dearest; and there is a fresh reason for our clinging to our lowly estate. But see! they have placed the coffin in the hearse; and that is Mr. Eglistoun coming down the steps, with a lady in deep mourning on his arm. She can hardly see to walk, with that thick veil over her face, and a handkerchief, almost the whole time, at her eyes.—Poor woman! how I pity her!"

"It is Mrs. Avondale," said Mr. Leroy. "No wonder she is cast down; husband and child, both taken within so short a time."

Ellen's eyes brimmed over, but she dried them hastily.

"She had the very loveliest face I ever looked upon. Do you remember, Laurence, how I admired her the first time I ever saw her? which was from our kitchen window."

"I remember it well. She had 'beauty, wealth, and troops of friends.' One would think she had need of nothing to complete her earthly happiness."

"O, Laurence, what do all these things avail to the woman who in her husband's honor never safely trusted? And that is what, my mind misgives me, poor young Mrs. Eglistoun could never have done."

Mr. Leroy turned toward the speaker with a look of indescribable tenderness in his now radiant eyes, met by her own with a speaking glance, in which all womanly trust and devotion mingled, while their hands met in a mutual clasp across the lap of the child.

Without a shade of doubt as to the truth of my assertion, I unhesitatingly aver that, in all the thronged streets and cheery homesides of our modern Athens, there beat no happier hearts than those of our lame mechanic and his deformed bride.

Verily, happiness dwelleth not in externals.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONCLUSION.

For more than an entire year—the orthodox period of widowhood, so far as I have been able to inform myself—Mr. Eglistoun supported his dignity in solitary state, and then gave to his mansion a new mistress.

Miss Villers was the second woman whom he honored by the bestowal of his name, together with "all appurtenances thereunto pertaining;" and the world, that is the little world of exclusiveness in which he "lived and moved and had his being," warmly approved his choice.

The bride's trosseau was superb. More than one fashionable journal gave the public the important information that the bridal robe was of point D'Alençon, over white brocade; and that the bridesmaids were attired in rose-colored dresses with Honiton polkas.

By one of those strange coincidences that sometimes startle even the most unthinking observers of human events, it happened that, beneath one of these newspaper paragraphs descriptive of "marriage in high life," occurred the following article:

"Mysterious Discovery.

"This morning the dead body of a young woman, with an infant tightly clasped in her arms, was found floating in the dock, and picked up by some boatmen, not far from the end of Commercial Wharf. It is uncertain how long these bodies have remained in the water, but probably not many days, as they, as yet, show no traces of decomposition.

"From the resemblance between the features of the two deceased, it is evident that they bore to each other the relationship of mother and son. There were no marks of violence on the persons of either; and every circumstance connected with their discovery points to probable suicide. Both were expen-

sively clad; and the woman wore a gold watch at her girdle, and a costly bracelet on her arm; so that want could not have been the cause impelling her to the commission of the rash act. She is rather short of stature, with well-rounded proportions, fair complexion, and a profusion of light curls about the face.—The infant is a finely formed child, with dark wavy hair, and a more intellectual cast of head than belongs to the mother. On the inside of the bracelet she wore, were found the subjoined initials: M. W., from G. E. It is hoped that the above particulars may lead to the identification of deceased, by surviving friends, that the mystery of their untimely fate may be explained, before it is rendered forever too late, by their consignment to an obscure and nameless grave."

Who shall envy Mr. Eglistoun when he learns that while he was receiving the felicitations of his numerous friends on the happy auspices of the brilliant marriage connection just formed by himself—while surrounded by those who delighted to do him honor, in his own superbly appointed drawing-room—his only child and that child's mother were stretched in the chill embrace of the cold sea waves, where they had met their doom—a doom self-sought on the part of the simple, erring, wretched Mabel, driven to desperation by a knowledge of the certainty that another was about to fill the place of bride, so often promised to herself?

A few days later, in company with his wife and sister, to the latter of whom a sea-voyage had been recommended as the only means of renovating her debilitated system, Mr. Eglistoun steamed down the harbor, on his way to New York, whence he purposed embarking for Liverpool. A more graphic pen than mine might essay to depict his reflections, as, leaning over the vessel's side, he gazed into the dark waters which had received his first-born's latest sigh; but I forbear.

One single scene more, and I have done. In a lofty vaulted apartment, in one of Rome's proudest palaces—what cannot British gold achieve on the continent?—were collected a gay and brilliant assemblage of the city's *élite*. Richly hewn pillars, of

airy and graceful proportions, supported the carved and vaulted roof, while the walls had been elaborately frescoed by the cunning hand of a master in art.

The air was fragrant with the breath of perfumed lamps. Some of the party were gathered together in little groups, while others lounged on the luxuriously cushioned ottomans and divans that were ranged in semicircular rows, all facing toward one end of the spacious apartment.

Sparkling wit and light repartee seemed the order of the evening. But even here, all were not gay. This gentleman, so cold and self-possessed, is Mr. Eglistoun; and the lady sitting on the divan beside him is his sister. Neither seems disposed to exchange a word or a look with the other. Mr. Eglistoun is scarcely more than thirty; so it cannot be age that has ploughed these deep furrows in his brow, or thickly threaded his hair with silver. But though, for the time, his mien is somewhat of the gloomiest, he fully maintains all his old loftiness of bearing. With the reputation and reality of great wealth, a commanding person and unexceptionable address, what was there to prevent his becoming an object of "distinguished consideration" to any society he chose to honor by his presence? Does society trouble itself to look beneath the surface of character, and inquire too closely into the moral worth of its favorites? On the contrary, are not poverty and vulgarity the only *crimes* it finds impossible to forgive?

Still, languid, inanimate, Elmeira leans one white, uncovered shoulder against the marble pillar at her side, as drearily alone as if in her quiet chamber, looking forth on many a tower and spire of the old imperial city. Standing near her, gaily chatting with a handsome young *attaché* of the English embassy, was her brother's wife. Over a dress of white glacé, she wore a black lace robe, ornamented with clusters of golden wheat, and looped up with a bunch of scarlet fuschias. A little spray of rubies gleamed through her raven curls; and a clasp of the same showy stone fastened her girdle of Etruscan gold. In comparison with the fair-haired, light-robed blondes standing near, she

was like some gorgeous tropical flower in contrast with the paler lilies of the North.

By a movement sudden and simultaneous, the whole company seated themselves with a look of evident expectancy, while the curtain which had veiled the farther end of the apartment was drawn up, and from a raised dais, that magic mistress of song, Giulia Porsini, bowed to her audience. The celebrated pianist at her side, seating himself at the instrument, glided with apparent ease into a spirited and elaborate symphony; and soon the full liquid tones of the dark-eyed, raven-tressed Signorina mingled with the notes of the piano.

The room was admirably adapted for the very purpose to which it was now assigned. There was little, save the cushions of the divans, and the clothing of its occupants, to deaden the delicious sounds now filling it; for the floor was of variously hued marble, and the windows of stained glass, without draperies.

Every breath was hushed, every ear strained, to catch the faintest intonation of the genius-inspired songstress. I say every one, but I mistake: there is one gentleman of goodly presence who is regarding Elmeira Eglistoun with more than all the interest she is bestowing on the famed enchantress of the hour. By an accidental turn of the head, Elmeira encounters this fixed and earnest gaze, and, on the instant, cheek, neck, and brow are crimson red with blushes. Much vexed with herself at this involuntary display of emotion, she hastily averted her head, without any token of recognition, assuming her coldest and most unapproachable air.

There was a pause, a short recess in the music at the conclusion of the first song. The audience rose to their feet, with an irrepressible burst of enthusiastic applause. Lady Newpeer was in a glow of triumphant delight, being assured by this demonstration of her guests that her private concert would be one of the most brilliant successes of the season.

Taking advantage of the slight confusion in the room, Elmeira Eglistoun quietly made her way out of it. Along lofty

corridors she heedlessly strayed, until the soft ripple of trickling waters fell soothingly on her ear; and descending a flight of marble stairs, she entered the room whence the sound proceeded. A single swinging lamp lighted the apartment. In its centre was a fountain, murmuring liquid music. Basin rose above basin, each ascending one smaller than the one beneath it, and each upheld by the supporting arms of exquisitely sculptured nymphs and naiads. Very lovely were they all; but a still fresher type of beauty, from Nature's own cunning hand, was to be found in the flowering shrubs, almost deserving the name of trees, springing from the encircling border of moss that was kissed by the lower fountain's brink. To this, a little flight of marble steps ran down; and on the top one of these, Elmeira seated herself, while from the lofty dome of richly stained glass, high above, the soft light of an Italian moon came down with mellowed lustre.

So, it was really Gerald Vernet she had seen to-night; but how changed this intellectual-looking, self-possessed man from the shy but ardent youth she remembered so well! Evidently, the all-absorbing pursuit of gain had no ill effect upon the body, however it might have cramped the mind. She could not have told why, but there was bitterness in the thought: her tears fell, one by one, into the crystal waters of the fountain, whose depths she was unconsciously scanning.

A hasty step—a quick dash of the tears from her eyes—and the object of her thoughts stood before her.

With chill, formal courtesy she expressed her pleasure that the climate of India had so well agreed with him, and that he had so much improved in his long absence.

"You may well say 'long absence,'" he earnestly replied; "for the years have been ages to me. But, Miss Eglistoun, you give an old friend but a cold greeting, after his long exile."

"And if I do, is it wholly my fault? Have you taken the slightest pains to keep yourself alive in my remembrance? Truly, for the last year, I have scarcely known whether to think of you as amongst the living or the dead."

"Then you *have* thought of me, Elmeira; thank you for even that admission."

"Yes, Mr. Vernet, I thought of you as of one mad in his unslakeable thirst for gain."

There was biting scorn in the emphasis with which she spoke, as well as in the words themselves. He turned away with an indignant flush on his face, took a few steps toward the arched door-way, then came back to her side.

"If, for the second time, you will dash my hopes—the cherished hopes of years to the ground, you shall, at least, know clearly what it is that you spurn. If I have been mad in my wild pursuit of gain, you, of all women, should not be the first to cast the reproach in my teeth; for it was for your sake alone I toiled so unceasingly for wealth. Before I saw you, it was a nobler ambition that spurred me on. I would have risen to eminence in my profession, for others' good, as well as my own; but when you taunted me with being a fortune hunter, while in reality I was pouring forth my whole soul at your feet, I resolved, at all hazards, to have the wealth which alone could prove to you how disinterested was my attachment.

"I hoped that you might, in a measure, divine my motives, and no longer deny the reward to my devotion, as, year by year, I took pains to inform myself of the fact of your still remaining single. Yes, you shall know the full length and breadth of my folly: I did sometimes venture even to hope that you would send me some slight token, the faintest would have been enough, to recall me from my weary exile; but none such came; and what boots it, now, that I have won a fortune that must have raised me above the suspicion of mercenary motives, could you have received me as a favored aspirant to your hand? Well, do not grieve; it is not your fault, but my misfortune, that your heart cannot respond to a love like mine."

The eyes that had regarded him, when he commenced speaking, with no warmer expression than that of a searching incredulity, now swam with tears.

"Forgive me, Gerald—I never suspected—I did not even believe man capable of such unselfish devotion."

The sudden revulsion of feeling, from despair to hope, as he gazed in her downcast face, was, for the moment, so powerful as

to deprive him of the power of utterance. Standing so near her, he yet restrained himself from so much as clasping her hand in his own; for servants were passing and repassing in the corridor, and dark Italian eyes might be stealthily espying them. He would by no means expose her to remark.

It was the voice of the nightingale perched on a branch of the tall shrub above them that broke the silence. Both hearers were electrified at the sound, and involuntarily exchanged glances of thrilling import. That single note, so clear! so triumphant! yet with the inevitable undertone of deep sadness which ever mars even the sweetest of earthly harmony, quivering through its close, had struck a chord in the heart of either, which words would have been powerless to reach.

"It is time we were back in the concert-room," he said, a few minutes later; "I will not request you to go with me; but may I not ask to join you there, and that soon?"

"*Ask* nothing, Gerald; but command me as you will. Henceforth I willingly submit myself to your guidance, if that may prove some small atonement for the sacrifice I have unwittingly exacted of you."

Could this woman, so gently submissive, her cheeks tinged with maidenly blushes, her eyes glowing with the softest love-light, be the sarcastic Elmeira Eglistoun, who but now wounded her companion to the quick, with words of stinging reproach! Stranger transformations than this have been wrought, ere now, by the elfish god of the golden bow.

Mr. Vernet paused, on reaching the opposite side of the fountain, plucked a small twig of orange blossoms from its parent stem, and, with a look of arch significance, threw it across to Elmeira, who, with outstretched hand, dexterously caught it, still dripping with spray.

"How brilliantly our quiet sister is looking to-night," remarked Mrs. Eglistoun to her husband, several hours later in the evening.

"She is, indeed," was the prompt response. "I have not seen her look so like her old self for years. She has shut herself away from society quite too long, and I shall insist on her

seeing more of it, now that I see how it inspirits her. I only wish it would have the same effect on *me*." And the speaker sighed drearily.

"Look, Grahame," insisted his wife, without noticing the sigh, "and tell me who is that elegant looking gentleman approaching Elmeira."

Mr. Eglistoun languidly raised his glass to his eye before replying:

"That! why I verily believe that is the young lawyer—Evret, or some such name—who used, years ago, to visit occasionally at our house in Boston. I rather fancied that he was a little inclined to be sweet upon our Elmeira, at one time; but she turned him the cold shoulder, if I am not mistaken, so there was an end to it. However, if it is her whim to take him up now, as she is too delicate in health to be thwarted, we must even tolerate him. After all, if he amuses her and helps her to pass the time pleasantly, I may yet go so far as to accord him the *entrée* to our own reception-room. But what is this? Prince Guardicini taking the quondam lawyer by the arm and leading him aside, as if for a confidential *tête-à-tête!* Now you may obtain the desired introduction to the prince."

"Thank you; but I have already obtained one, through the kindness of Lady Newpeer; though I had hardly time to exchange a word with him, before some one else claimed his notice. He is so much the lion of the evening that no one can expect long to monopolize his attention. Ah! there is the summons to the refreshment-room. I believe I will permit you to be my escort."

"Thank you; I suppose you have some good reason for vouchsafing to your husband so unusual a favor."

"I have, indeed; I wish to point out to you the becoming head-dress of Lady Atheland—a very desirable acquaintance, by the way, niece to a duchess, and with large expectations—for I wish you to have one made for me exactly like it, only let mine be of rubies instead of pearls. There, the Prince has given his arm to Lady Newpeer. How superb he is, with his orders and medals, and the most divine moustaches in the world. I could

almost lose my heart to this prince of princes, if it were not for making my husband jealous."

"Me jealous! Pray never make any such absurd supposition again. I am no second Othello, to eat my own heart up, and work myself up to the commission of murder, for any such pitiful passion. So, enjoy yourself your own way, only within bounds of discretion. I would not have you expose yourself to the unkindly comments of these fastidious English fashionables, by open flirtation; and you surely would not indulge in secret love intrigues, in a land where stillettos are worn for use as well as ornament. You see, it is only of your own good, I am thinking."

"Thank you, I see."

There was a little cloud on the young wife's brow. Was it that, in her own mind, there lurked a shade of vain regret at her own powerlessness to move to jealousy the cold, impassive, polished man of the world, on whose arm she leaned? but who yet seemed separated from her by an immeasurable distance! If so, it was but for an instant. Another, and she was in admiring contemplation of the jewelled fan—Mr. Eglistoun's latest gift—that she carried in her hand. Was ever wife blessed with so munificent a husband? Never! She was the happiest woman in the world—if she could only think so.

They had been but a short time in the flower-garlanded supper-room, when Mr. Eglistoun exclaimed, in an accent of surprise:

"Why, there is Evret—if that is his name—standing beside Elmeira, but engaged in close conversation with the English Embassador. He seems to be a man of more consequence than I thought: do not let me forget to make up a little dinner party in his honor, the first day we are at leisure. I suppose you know that that is the Princess Guardicini, at whom you are looking so earnestly. Lovely as an angel, isn't she?"

"She is quite too statuesque to suit my taste. Her face has no more color than marble; and she is lifeless and inanimate to the last degree."

"Hers is not what I should call a spirited face, I grant you; but then any deficiency in that respect is more than atoned for by the delicious and graceful languor of her every movement."

"She is intensely proud looking," rejoined Mrs. Eglistoun, secretly piqued, in spite of herself, at this warm praise of those charms in another to which *she* could lay no claim; but of course she had placed any open display of resentment out of her power, by her recent eulogies of her Grace's husband.

"Why should she not be proud, with a Venetian noble of the highest rank for her father, and an English countess, with, I can't tell how long a pedigree, for her mother?"

"Ah," sighed Mrs. Eglistoun, "we republicans appreciate the advantages of rank, none better, though there is no such thing as good descent in America."

"I beg your pardon; but my own ancestors can boast an English origin; and were of gentle, if not of noble, birth."

His wife colored deeply: her own genealogy would not bear too close inspection; and she was not disposed to pursue the theme.

"Positively, the Prince is approaching us," her husband shortly resumed, "and I leave you to his superior attractions."

Profoundly ennuyé, his jaded senses craving the relief of some fresh stimulus, Mr. Eglistoun made his way to the side of the Princess Guardicini; and as she spoke English fluently, he had little difficulty in making himself agreeable. Not so Mrs. Eglistoun, whom the Prince approached with an air of languid though haughty courtesy, not wholly devoid of a flattery of its own, seeming as it did to imply that for no other person present would he have undertaken even that amount of effort. But when it came to even a superficial interchange of thought, the case grew desperate. She was confounded by his spasmodic attempts at *executing* the king's English, and her anglicised Italian grated harshly on ears accustomed to the smooth and liquid flow of music's sweetest tongue. With a feeling of mutual relief they separated.

Why linger over the conclusion of a tale that is told? Only

this let me say; if any poor line herein set down, shall be, in degree however slight, instrumental in enforcing the truth of that sturdy protest of sterling manhood—

> "What though on hamely fare we dine,
> Wear hoddin gray, and a' that;
> Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
> A man's a man for a' that;
> For a' that, and a' that,
> Their tinsel show, and a' that;
> The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
> Is king o' men for a' that"—

I trust it may not have been written in vain.

THE END.